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FAIRY TALES.





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from

Hans Christian Andersen

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Fairy Tales and Legends.

THE WILD SWANS.

FAR hence, in a country whither the Swallows fly in our winter-time, there dwelt a King who had eleven sons, and one daughter, the beautiful Elise. The eleven brothers went to school with stars on their breasts and swords by their sides ; they wrote on golden tablets with diamond pens, and could read either with a book or without one ; in short, it was easy to perceive that they were princes. Their sister Elise used to sit upon a little glass stool, and had a picture-book which had cost the half of a kingdom. Oh ! the children were so happy ! But happy they were not to remain always.

Their father, the King, married a very wicked Queen, who was not at all kind to the poor children ; they found this out on the first day after the marriage, when there was a grand gala at the palace ; for when the children played at receiving company, instead of giving them as many cakes and sweetmeats as they liked, the Queen gave them only some sand in a little dish, and told them to imagine that was something nice.

The week after, she sent the little Elise to be brought up by some peasants in the country, and it was not long before she told the King so many falsehoods about the poor princes, that he would have nothing more to do with them.

"Away, out into the world, and take care of yourselves," said the wicked Queen ; "fly away in the form of great speechless birds." But she could not make their transformation so disagreeable as she wished—the Princes were changed into eleven white swans. Sending

forth a strange cry, they flew out of the palace windows, over the park and over the wood.

It was still early in the morning when they passed by the place where Elise lay sleeping in the peasant's cottage; they flew several times round the roof, stretched their long necks, and flapped their wings, but no one either heard or saw them; they were forced to fly away, up to the clouds and into the wide world; so on they went to the forest, which extended as far as the seashore.

The poor little Elise stood in the peasant's cottage amusing herself with a green leaf, for she had no other plaything. She pricked a hole in the leaf and peeped through it at the sun, and then she fancied she saw her brother's bright eyes, and whenever the warm sunbeams shone full upon her cheeks, she thought of her brother's kisses.

One day passed exactly like the other. When the wind blew through the thick hedge of rose-trees in front of the house, she would whisper to the roses, "Who is more beautiful than you?" but the roses would shake their heads and say, "Elise." And when the peasant's wife sat on Sundays at the door of her cottage reading her hymn-book, the wind would rustle in the leaves and say to the book, "Who is more pious than thou?"—"Elise," replied the hymn-book. And what the roses and the hymn-book said, was no more than the truth.

Elise, who was now fifteen years old, was sent for to return home; but when the Queen saw how beautiful she was, she hated her the more, and would willingly have transformed her like her brothers into a wild swan; but she dared not do so, because the King wished to see his daughter.

So the next morning the Queen went into a bath which was made of marble, and fitted up with soft pillows and the gayest carpets; she took three toads, kissed them, and said to one, "Settle thou upon Elise's head, that she may become dull and sleepy like

thee.”—“Settle thou upon her forehead,” said she to another, “and let her become ugly like thee, so that her father may not know her again.”—And “Do thou place thyself upon her bosom,” whispered she to the third, “that her heart may become corrupt and evil, a torment to herself.”

She then put the toads into the clear water, which was immediately tinted with a green colour, and having called Elise, took off her clothes and made her get into the bath—one toad settled among her hair, another on her forehead, and the third upon her bosom; but Elise seemed not at all aware of it. She rose up, and three poppies were seen swimming on the water.

Had not the animals been poisonous and kissed by a witch, they would have been changed into roses whilst they remained on Elise’s head and heart—she was too good for magic to have any power over her. When the Queen perceived this, she rubbed walnut juice all over the maiden’s skin, so that it became quite swarthy, smeared a nasty salve over her lovely face, and entangled her long thick hair. It was impossible to recognise the beautiful Elise after this.

When her father saw her, he was shocked, and said she could not be his daughter; no one would have anything to do with her but the mastiff and the swallows; but they, poor things, could not say anything in her favour.

Poor Elise wept, and thought of her eleven brothers, not one of whom she saw at the palace. In great distress she stole away and wandered the whole day over fields and moors, till she reached the forest. She knew not where to go, but she was so sad, and longed so much to see her brothers, who had been driven out into the world, that she determined to seek and find them.

She had not been long in the forest when night came on, and she lost her way amid the darkness. So she lay down on the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and leaned her head against the trunk of a tree. It was still

in the forest, the air was mild, and from the grass and mould around gleamed the green light of many hundred glowworms ; and when Elise lightly touched one of the branches hanging over her, bright insects fell down upon her like falling stars.

All the night long she dreamed of her brothers. They were all children again, played together, wrote with diamond pens upon golden tablets, and looked at the pictures in the beautiful book which had cost half of a kingdom.

But they did not, as formerly, make straight strokes and pothooks upon the tablets ; no, they wrote of the bold actions they had performed, and the strange adventures they had encountered, and in the picture-book everything seemed alive. The birds sang, men and women stepped from the book and talked to Elise and her brothers. However, when she turned over the leaves, they jumped back into their places, so that the pictures did not get confused together.

When Elise awoke the sun was already high in the heavens. She could not see it certainly, for the tall trees of the forest entwined their thick-leaved branches closely together, and, as the sunbeams played upon them, they looked like a golden veil waving to and fro. The air was fragrant, and the birds perched upon Elise's shoulders. She heard the noise of water ; there were several springs forming a pool, with the prettiest pebbles at the bottom ; bushes were growing thickly round. But the deer had trodden a broad path through them, and by this path Elise went down to the water's edge. The water was so clear that, had not the boughs and bushes around been moved by the wind, you might have fancied they were painted upon the smooth surface, so distinctly was each little leaf mirrored upon it.

As soon as Elise saw her face reflected in the water, she was quite startled, so brown and ugly did it look ; however, when she wetted her little hand, and rubbed her brow and eyes, the white skin again appeared. So Elise

took off her clothes, stepped into the fresh water, and in the whole world there was not a king's daughter more beautiful than she then appeared.

After she dressed herself, and braided her long hair, she went to the bubbling spring, drank out of the hollow of her hand, and then wandered farther into the forest. She did not know where she was going, but she thought of her brothers, and of the good God who, she felt, would never forsake her. He it was who made the wild crab-trees grow in order to feed the hungry, and who showed her a tree whose boughs bent under the weight of their fruit. She made her noonday meal under its shade, propped up the boughs, and then walked on amid the dark twilight of the forest.

It was so still that she could hear her own footsteps, and the rustling of each little withered leaf that was crushed beneath her feet. Not a bird was to be seen; not a single sunbeam penetrated through the thick foliage; and the tall stems of the trees stood so close together, that when she looked straight before her, she seemed encircled by trellis-work. Oh! there was a loneliness in this forest such as Elise had never known before.

And the night was so dark! Not a single glowworm sent forth its light. Sad at heart she lay down to sleep, and then it seemed to her as if the boughs above her opened, and she saw an Angel looking down with gentle aspect, and a thousand little cherubs all around him. When she awoke in the morning she could not tell whether this was a dream, or whether she had really been so watched.

She walked on and met an old woman with a basket full of berries; the old woman gave her some of them, and Elise asked if she had seen eleven princes ride through the wood.

"No," said the old woman, "but I saw yesterday eleven Swans with golden crowns on their heads swim down the brook near this place."

And she led Elise to a precipice, the base of which was washed by a brook ; the trees on each side stretched their long leafy branches towards each other, and where they could not unite, the roots had disengaged themselves from the earth and hung over the water.

Elise bade the old woman farewell, and wandered by the side of the stream till she came to the place where it reached the open sea.

The great, beautiful sea lay stretched out before the maiden's eyes, but not a ship, not a boat was to be seen ; how was she to go on ? She observed the little stones on the shore, all of which the waves had washed into a round form ; glass, iron, stone, everything that lay scattered there, had been moulded into shape, and yet the water which had done this was much softer than Elise's delicate little hand. " It rolls on unweariedly," said she, " and subdues what is so hard ; I will be no less unwearied ! Thank you for the lesson you have given me, ye bright rolling waves ; some day, my heart tells me, you shall carry me to my dear brothers ! "

There lay upon the wet sea-grass eleven white swan-feathers ; Elise collected them together ; drops of water hung about them, whether dew or tears she could not tell. She was quite alone on the seashore, but she did not care for that ; the sea presented an eternal variety to her, more indeed in a few hours than the gentle inland waters would have offered in a whole year.

When a black cloud passed over the sky, it seemed as if the sea were saying, " I too can look dark ; " and then the wind would blow and the waves fling out their white foam. But when the clouds shone with a bright red tint, and the winds were asleep, the sea also became like a rose-leaf in hue. It was now green, now white ; but as it reposed peacefully, a slight breeze on the shore caused the water to heave gently like the bosom of a sleeping child.

At sunset Elise saw eleven Wild Swans with golden crowns on their heads fly towards the land ; they flew

one behind another, looking like a streaming white ribbon. Elise climbed the precipice, and concealed herself behind a bush; the swans settled close to her, and flapped their long white wings.

As the sun sank beneath the water, the swans also vanished, and in their place stood eleven handsome princes, the brothers of Elise. She uttered a loud cry, for although they were very much altered, Elise knew them to be her brothers. She ran into their arms, called them by their names—and how happy were *they* to see and recognise their sister, who was now grown so tall and so beautiful! They laughed and wept, and soon told each other how wickedly their step-mother had treated them.

“We,” said the eldest of the brothers, “fly or swim as long as the sun is above the horizon, but, when it sinks below, we appear again in our human form. We are therefore obliged to look out for a safe resting-place, for, if at sunset we were flying among the clouds, we should fall down as soon as we resumed our own form. We do not dwell here. A land quite as beautiful as this lies on the opposite side of the sea, but it is far off. To reach it, we have to cross the deep waters, and there is no island midway on which we may rest at night; one little solitary rock rises from the waves, and upon it we find only just room enough to stand side by side.

There we spend the night in our human form, and when the sea is rough, we are sprinkled by its foam; but we are thankful for this resting-place, for without it we should never be able to visit our dear native country. Only once in the year is this visit to the home of our fathers permitted. We require two of the longest days for our flight, and can remain here only eleven days, during which time we fly over the large forest, whence we can see the palace in which we were born, where our father dwells, and the tower of the church in which our mother was buried.

Here even the trees and bushes seem of kin to us;

here the wild horses still race over the plains, as in the days of our childhood; here the charcoal-burner still sings the same old tunes to which we used to dance in our youth; here we are still drawn, and here we have found thee, thou dear little sister! We have yet two days longer to stay here; then we must fly over the sea to a land beautiful indeed, but not our fatherland. How shall we take thee with us? We have neither ship nor boat!"

"How shall I be able to release you?" said the sister. And so they went on talking almost the whole of the night. They slumbered only a few hours.

Elise was awakened by the rustling of swans' wings which were fluttering above her. Her brothers were again transformed, and for some time flew around in large circles. At last they flew far, far away; one of them remained behind; it was the youngest, and he laid his head in her lap and she stroked his white wings. They remained the whole day together. Towards evening the others came back, and when the sun set, they stood again on the firm ground in their natural form.

"To-morrow we shall fly away, and may not return for a year, but we cannot leave thee; hast thou courage to accompany us? My arm is strong enough to bear thee through the forest; shall we not have strength enough in our wings to carry thee over the sea?"

"Yes, take me with you," said Elise. They spent the whole night in weaving a mat of the pliant willow bark and the tough rushes, and their mat was thick and strong. Elise lay down upon it, and when the sun rose, and the brothers were again transformed into wild swans, they seized the mat with their beaks and flew up high among the clouds with their dear sister, who was still sleeping. The sunbeams shone full upon her face; so one of the swans flew over her head, and shaded her with his broad wings.

They were already far from land when Elise awoke: she thought she was still dreaming, so strange did it



appear to her to be travelling through the air, and over the sea. By her side lay a cluster of pretty berries, and a handful of delicious roots. Her youngest brother had laid them there; and she thanked him with a smile, for she knew him as the swan who flew over her head and shaded her with his wings.

They flew so high that the first ship they saw beneath them seemed like a white sea-gull hovering over the water. Elise saw behind her a large cloud, which looked like a mountain, and on it she saw the shadows of herself and the eleven swans. It formed a picture more splendid than any she had ever yet seen. Soon, however, the sun rose higher, the cloud remained far behind, and then the floating shadowy picture disappeared.

The whole day they continued to fly with a whizzing noise somewhat like an arrow; but yet they went slower than usual—they had their sister to carry. A heavy tempest gathered as the evening approached; Elise anxiously watched the sun. It was setting; still the solitary rock could not be seen; it appeared to her that the swans plied their wings with increasing vigour.

Alas! it would be her fault if her brothers did not arrive at the place in time! they would become human beings when the sun set, and, if this happened before they reached the rock, they must fall into the sea and be drowned. She prayed to God most fervently; still no rock was to be seen; the black clouds drew nearer, violent gusts of wind announced the approach of a tempest, the clouds rested upon a huge wave which rolled quickly forwards, and one flash of lightning rapidly succeeded another.

The sun was now on the rim of the sea. Elise's heart beat violently; the swans shot downwards so swiftly that she thought she must fall. But again they began to hover; the sun was half sunk beneath the water, and at that moment she saw the little rock below her; it looked like a seal's head when he raises it just above the water. And the sun was sinking fast—it seemed scarcely larger

than a star—her foot touched the hard ground, and the sun vanished like the last spark on a burnt piece of paper.

Arm in arm stood her brothers around her ; there was only just room for her and them—the sea beat tempestuously against the rock, flinging over them a shower of foam. The sky seemed in a blaze, with the fast-succeeding flashes of fire that lightened it, and peal after peal rolled on the thunder, but sister and brothers kept firm hold of each other's hands. They sang a psalm, and their psalm gave them comfort and courage.

By daybreak the air was pure and still, and, as soon as the sun rose, the swans flew away with Elise from the rock. The waves rose higher and higher, and, when they looked from the clouds down upon the blackish-green sea, covered with white foam, they might have fancied that millions of swans were swimming on its surface.

As day advanced, Elise saw floating in the air before her a land of mountains with glaciers, and in the centre, a palace a mile in length, with splendid colonnades, surrounded by palm-trees and gorgeous-looking flowers as large as mill-wheels. She asked if this was the country to which they were flying, but the swans shook their heads, for what she saw was the beautiful airy castle of the fairy Morgana, where no human being was admitted. Whilst Elise still bent her eyes upon it, mountains, trees, and castle all disappeared, and in their place stood twelve churches with high towers and pointed windows—she fancied she heard the organ play, but it was only the murmur of the sea.

She was now close to these churches, but behold ! they changed into a large fleet sailing under them ; she looked down and saw it was only a sea-mist passing rapidly over the water. An endless variety floated before her eyes, till at last the land to which she was going appeared in sight. Beautiful blue mountains, cedar woods, towns, and castles rose to view. Long before sunset Elise sat down among the mountains, in front of a large cavern ; delicate young

creepers grew around so thickly that it appeared covered with gay embroidered carpets.

"Now we shall see what thou wilt dream of to-night!" said her youngest brother, as he showed her the sleeping chamber destined for her.

"Oh, that I could dream how you might be freed from the spell!" said she; and this thought filled her mind. She prayed for God's help, nay, even in her dreams she continued praying, and it appeared to her that she was flying up high in the air towards the castle of the fairy Morgana. The fairy came forward to meet her, radiant and beautiful, and yet she fancied she resembled the old woman who had given her berries in the forest, and told her of the swans with golden crowns.

"Thou *canst* free thy brothers," said she; "but hast thou courage and patience enough? The water is indeed softer than thy delicate hands, and yet can mould the hard stones to its will, but then it cannot feel the pain which thy tender fingers will feel; it has no heart, and cannot suffer the anxiety and grief which thou must suffer. Dost thou see these stinging-nettles which I have in my hand? There are many of the same kind growing round the cave where thou art sleeping; only those that grow there or on the graves in the churchyard are of use, remember that!

"Thou must pluck them, although they will sting thy hand, thou must trample on the nettles with thy feet, and get yarn from them, and with this yarn thou must weave eleven shirts with long sleeves; throw them over the eleven wild swans, and the spell is broken. But mark this: from the moment that thou beginnest thy work till it is completed, even should it take thee years, thou must not speak a word; the first syllable that escapes thy lips will fall like a dagger into the hearts of thy brothers; on thy tongue depends their life. Mark well all this!"

And at the same moment the fairy touched Elise's hands with a nettle, which made them burn like fire, and Elise awoke. It was broad daylight, and close to her lay a nettle like the one she had seen in her dream. She fell

upon her knees, thanked God, and then went out of the cave in order to begin her work. She plucked with her own delicate hands the stinging-nettles; they burned large blisters on her hands and arms, but she bore the pain willingly in the hope of releasing her dear brothers. She trampled on the nettles with her naked feet, and spun the green yarn.

At sunset came her brothers. Elise's silence quite frightened them; they thought it must be the effect of some fresh spell of their wicked step-mother. But when they saw her blistered hands, they found out what their sister was doing for their sakes. The youngest brother wept, and, when his tears fell upon her hands, Elise felt no more pain, and the blisters disappeared.

The whole night she spent in her work, for she could not rest till she had released her brothers. All the following day she sat in her solitude, for the swans had flown away; but never had time passed so quickly. One shirt was ready; she now began the second.

Suddenly a hunting horn resounded among the mountains. Elise was frightened. The noise came nearer, she heard the hounds barking; in great terror she fled into the cave, bound up the nettles which she had gathered and combed into a bundle, and sat down upon it.

In the same moment a large dog sprang out from the bushes. Two others immediately followed, they barked loudly, ran away and then returned. It was not long before the hunters stood in front of the cave; the handsomest among them was the King of that country; he stepped up to Elise. Never had he seen a lovelier maiden.

"How camest thou here, thou beautiful child?" said he.

Elise shook her head: she dared not speak, for a word might have cost her the life of her brothers, and she hid her hands under her apron lest the King should see how she was suffering.

"Come with me," said he, "thou must not stay here!

If thou art good as thou art beautiful, I will dress thee in velvet and silk, I will put a gold crown upon thy head, and thou shalt dwell in my palace!" So he lifted her upon his horse, while she wept and wrung her hands; but the King said, "I only desire thy happiness! thou shalt thank me for this some day!" and away he rode over mountains and valleys, holding her on his horse in front, whilst the other hunters followed.

When the sun set, the King's magnificent capital with its churches and domes lay before them, and the King led Elise into the palace, where, in a marble hall, fountains were playing, and the walls and ceiling displayed the most beautiful paintings. But Elise cared not for all this splendour; she wept and mourned in silence, even whilst some female attendants dressed her in royal robes, wove costly pearls in her hair, and drew soft gloves over her blistered hands.

And now she was full dressed, and, as she stood in her splendid attire, her beauty was so dazzling that the courtiers all bowed low before her; and the King chose her for his bride, although the Archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the "beautiful lady of the wood must certainly be a witch, who had blinded their eyes, and infatuated the King's heart."

But the King did not listen; he ordered that music should be played. A sumptuous banquet was served up, and the loveliest maidens danced round the bride; she was led through fragrant gardens into magnificent halls, but not a smile was seen to play upon her lips or beam from her eyes. The King then opened a small room next her sleeping apartment; it was adorned with costly green tapestry, and exactly resembled the cave in which she had been found; upon the ground lay the bundle of yarn which she had spun from the nettles, and by the wall hung the shirt she had completed. One of the hunters had brought all this, thinking there must be something wonderful in it.

"Here thou mayest dream of thy former home," said

the King; "here is the work which employed thee; amidst all thy present splendour it may sometimes give thee pleasure to fancy thyself there again."

When Elise saw what was so dear to her heart, she smiled, and the blood returned to her cheeks; she thought her brothers might still be freed, and she kissed the King's hand. He pressed her to his heart, and ordered the bells of all the churches in the city to be rung, to announce the celebration of their wedding. The beautiful dumb maiden of the wood was to become Queen of the land.

The Archbishop whispered evil words in the King's ear, but they made no impression upon him; the marriage was solemnised, and the Archbishop himself was obliged to put the crown upon her head. In his rage he pressed the narrow rim so firmly on her forehead that it hurt her; but a heavier weight—sorrow for her brothers—lay upon her heart, and she did not feel bodily pain. She was still silent, a single word would have killed her brothers; her eyes, however, beamed with heartfelt love to the King, so good and handsome, who had done so much to make her happy.

She became more warmly attached to him every day. Oh! how much she wished she might confide to him all her sorrows. But she was forced to remain silent; she could not speak until her work was completed! To this end she stole away every night, and went into the little room that was fitted up in imitation of the cave; there she worked at her shirts, but by the time she had begun the seventh, all her yarn was spent.

She knew that the nettles she needed grew in the churchyard, but she must gather them herself; how was she to get them?

"Oh, what is the pain in my fingers compared to the anguish my heart suffers!" thought she. "I must venture to the churchyard; the good God will protect me!"

Fearful, as though she were about to do something wrong, one moonlight night she crept down to the

garden, and through the long avenues into the lonely road leading to the churchyard. She saw sitting on one of the broadest tombstones a number of ugly old witches. They took off their ragged clothes as if they were going to bathe, and digging with their long lean fingers into the fresh grass, drew up the dead bodies and devoured the flesh.

Elise was obliged to pass close by them, and the witches fixed their wicked eyes upon her; but she repeated her prayer, gathered the stinging-nettles, and took them back with her into the palace. One person only had seen her; it was the Archbishop, who was awake when others slept. Now he was convinced that all was not right about the Queen: she must be a witch, who had through her enchantments infatuated the King and all the people.

In the Confessional he told the King what he had seen, and what he feared; and, when the words came from his lips, the images of the saints shook their heads, as though they would say, "It is untrue; Elise is innocent!" But the Archbishop explained the omen otherwise; he thought it was a testimony against her that the holy images shook their heads at hearing of her sin.

Two large tears rolled down the King's cheeks; he returned home in doubt; he pretended to sleep at night, though sleep never visited him; and he noticed that Elise rose from her bed every night, and every time he followed her secretly and saw her enter her little room.

His countenance became darker every day; Elise perceived it, though she knew not the cause. She was much pained, and besides, what did she not suffer in her heart for her brothers! Her bitter tears ran down on the royal velvet and purple; they looked like bright diamonds, and all who saw the magnificence that surrounded her, wished themselves in her place.

She had now nearly finished her work, only one shirt was wanting; unfortunately, yarn was wanting also; she had not a single nettle left. Once more, only this one

time, she must go to the churchyard and gather a few handfuls. She shuddered when she thought of the solitary walk and of the horrid witches, but her resolution was as firm as her trust in God.

Elise went, the King and the Archbishop followed her ; they saw her disappear at the churchyard door, and, when they came nearer, they saw the witches sitting on the tombstones as Elise had seen them, and the King turned away, for he believed her whose head had rested on his bosom that very evening to be amongst them. "Let the people judge her !" said he. And the people condemned her to be burned.

She was now dragged from the King's apartments into a dark, damp prison, where the wind whistled through the grated window. Instead of velvet and silk, they gave her the bundle of nettles she had gathered ; on that must she lay her head, and the shirts she had woven must serve her as mattress and counterpane. But they could not have given her anything she valued so much ; and she continued her work, at the same time praying earnestly to her God. The boys sang scandalous songs about her in front of her prison ; not a soul comforted her with one word of love.

Towards evening she heard the rustling of Swans' wings at the grating. It was the youngest of her brothers, who had at last found his sister, and she sobbed aloud for joy, although she knew that the coming night would probably be the last of her life ; but then her work was almost finished and her brother was near.

The Archbishop came in order to spend the last hour with her ; he had promised the King he would ; but she shook her head and entreated him with her eyes and gestures to go. This night she must finish her work, or all she had suffered—her pain, her anxiety, her sleepless nights—would be in vain. The Archbishop went away with many angry words, but the unfortunate Elise knew herself to be innocent, and went on with her work.

Little mice ran busily about and dragged the nettles to

her feet, wishing to help her ; and the thrush perched on the iron bars of the window, and sang all night as merrily as he could, that Elise might not lose courage.

It was still twilight, just one hour before sunrise, when the eleven brothers stood before the palace gates, requesting an audience with the King. But it could not be, they were told ; it was still night, the King was asleep, and they dared not wake him. They entreated, they threatened ; the guard came up, and the King himself at last stepped out to ask what was the matter. At that moment the sun rose, the brothers could be seen no longer, and eleven white Swans flew away over the palace.

The people poured forth from the gates of the city ; they wished to see the witch burned. One wretched horse drew the cart in which Elise was placed ; a coarse frock of sackcloth had been put on her, her beautiful long hair hung loosely over her shoulders, her cheeks were of a deadly paleness, her lips moved gently, and her fingers wove the green yarn. Even on her way to her cruel death she did not give up her work ; the ten shirts lay at her feet, and she was now labouring to complete the eleventh. The rabble insulted her.

“Look at the witch, how she mutters ! She has not a hymn-book in her hand ; no, there she sits with her accursed hocus-pocus. Tear it from her ; tear it into a thousand pieces !”

And they all crowded about her, and were on the point of snatching away the shirts, when eleven white Swans came flying towards the cart ; they settled all round her, and flapped their wings. The crowd gave way in terror.

“It is a sign from Heaven ! She is certainly innocent !” whispered some ; they dared not say so aloud.

The Sheriff now seized her by the hand ; in a moment she threw the eleven shirts over the Swans, and eleven handsome Princes appeared in their place. The youngest had, however, only one arm, and a wing instead of the other, for one sleeve was deficient in his shirt—it had not been quite finished.

"Now I may speak," said she : "I am innocent !"

And the people who had seen what had happened bowed before her as before a saint. She, however, sank lifeless in her brothers' arms ; suspense, fear, and grief had quite exhausted her.

"Yes, she is innocent," said her eldest brother, and he now related their wonderful history. Whilst he spoke a fragrance as delicious as though it came from millions of roses diffused itself around, for every piece of wood in the funeral pile had taken root and sent forth branches. A hedge of blooming red roses surrounded Elise, and above all the others blossomed a flower of dazzling white colour, bright as a star. The King plucked it and laid it on Elise's bosom, whereupon she awoke from her trance with peace and joy in her heart.

And all the church-bells began to ring of their own accord ; and birds flew to the spot in swarms ; and there was a festive procession back to the palace, such as no King has ever seen equalled.'

THE UGLY DUCKLING.

It was beautiful in the country—it was summer-time—the wheat was yellow, the oats were green, the hay was stacked up in the green meadows, and the stork paraded about on his long red legs discoursing in Egyptian, which language he had learned from his mother. The fields and meadows were skirted by thick woods, and a deep lake lay in the midst of the woods.

Yes, it was indeed beautiful in the country ! The sunshine fell warm on an old mansion, surrounded by deep canals, and from the walls down to the water's edge there grew large burdock-leaves, so high that children could stand upright among them without being perceived.

This place was as wild and unfrequented as the thickest

part of the wood, and a duck had chosen to make her nest there. She was sitting on her eggs; but the pleasure she had felt at first was now almost gone, because she had been there so long, and had so few visitors, for the other ducks preferred swimming on the canals to sitting among the burdock-leaves gossiping with her.

At last the eggs cracked one after another, "Tchick, tchick!" All the eggs were alive, and one little head after another appeared. "Quack, quack," said the duck, and all got up as well as they could; they peeped about from under the green leaves, and as green is good for the eyes, their mother let them look as long as they pleased.

"How large the world is!" said the little ones, for they found their present situation very different from their former one, while they were in the egg-shells.

"Do you imagine this to be the whole of the world?" said the mother. "It extends far beyond the other side of the garden, to the pastor's field; but I have never been there. Are you all here?" And then she got up. "No, I have not got you all; the largest egg is still here. How long will this last? I am so weary of it!" And then she sat down again.

"Well, and how are you getting on?" asked an old duck, who had come to pay her a visit.

"This one egg keeps me so long," said the mother, "it will not break; but you should see the others! They are the prettiest little ducklings I have seen in all my days; they are all like their father—the good-for-nothing fellow! He has not been to visit me once."

"Let me see the egg that will not break," said the old duck; "depend upon it, it is a turkey's egg. I was cheated in the same way once myself, and I had such trouble with the young ones; for they were afraid of the water, and I could not get them there. I called and scolded, but it was all of no use. But let me see the egg—ah yes! to be sure, that is a turkey's egg. Leave it, and teach the other little ones to swim."

"I will sit on it a little longer," said the duck. "I have been sitting so long, that I may as well spend the harvest here."

"It is no business of mine," said the old duck, and away she waddled.

The great egg burst at last, "Tchick, tchick," said the little one, and out it tumbled—but oh! how large and ugly it was! The duck looked at it, "That is a great, strong creature," said she, "none of the others are at all like it; can it be a young turkey-cock? Well, we shall soon find out; it must go into the water, though I push it in myself."

The next day there was delightful weather, and the sun shone warmly upon all the green leaves when mother-duck with her family went down to the canal; plump she went into the water. "Quack, quack," cried she, and one duckling after another jumped in. The water closed over their heads, but all came up again, and swam together in the pleasantest manner; their legs moved without effort. All were there, even the ugly gray one.

"No! it is not a turkey," said the old duck; "only see how prettily it moves its legs, how upright it holds itself; it is my own child! It is also really very pretty when one looks more closely at it; quack, quack, now come with me; I will take you into the world, introduce you in the duck-yard; but keep close to me, or some one may tread on you, and beware of the cat."

So they came into the duck-yard. There was a horrid noise; two families were quarrelling about the remains of an eel, which in the end was secured by the cat.

"See, my children; such is the way of the world," said the mother-duck, wiping her beak, for she too was fond of roasted eels. "Now use your legs," said she, "keep together, and bow to the old duck you see yonder. She is the most distinguished of all the fowls present, and is of Spanish blood, which accounts for her dignified appearance and manners. And look, she has a red rag on her leg; that is considered extremely handsome, and is the greatest

distinction a duck can have. Don't turn your feet inwards ; a well-educated duckling always keeps his legs far apart, like his father and mother, just so—look ! Now bow your necks, and say, 'Quack' !”

And they did as they were told. But the other ducks who were in the yard looked at them and said aloud, “Only see, now we have another brood, as if there were not enough of us already ; and fie ! how ugly that one is, we will not endure it ;” and immediately one of the ducks flew at him, and bit him in the neck.

“Leave him alone,” said the mother, “he is doing no one any harm.”

“Yes, but he is so large, and so strange-looking, and therefore he shall be teased.”

“Those are fine children that our good mother has,” said the old duck with the red rag on her leg. “All are pretty except one, and that has not turned out well ; I almost wish it could be hatched over again.”

“That cannot be, please your highness,” said the mother. “Certainly he is not handsome, but he is a very good child, and swims as well as the others, indeed rather better. I think he will grow like the others all in good time, and perhaps will look smaller. He stayed so long in the egg-shell, that is the cause of the difference ;” and she scratched the duckling's neck, and stroked his whole body. “Besides,” added she, “he is a drake ; I think he will be very strong, therefore it does not matter so much, as he will fight his way through.”

“The other ducks are very pretty,” said the old duck. “Pray make yourselves at home, and if you find an eel's head you can bring it to me.”

And accordingly they made themselves at home.

But the poor little duckling who had come last out of its egg-shell, and who was so ugly, was bitten, pecked, and teased by both ducks and hens. “It is so large,” said they all. And the turkey-cock, who had come into the world with spurs on, and therefore fancied he was an emperor, puffed himself up like a ship in full sail, and

marched up to the duckling quite red with passion. The poor little thing scarcely knew what to do; he was quite distressed, because he was so ugly, and because he was the jest of the poultry yard.

So passed the first day, and afterwards matters grew worse and worse; the poor duckling was scorned by all. Even his brothers and sisters behaved unkindly, and were constantly saying, "I wish the cat catch thee, thou nasty creature!" The mother said, "Ah, if thou wert only far away!" The ducks bit him, the hens pecked him, and the girl who fed the poultry kicked him.

He ran over the hedge; the little birds in the bushes were terrified. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the duckling, shutting his eyes, while he ran on. At last he came to a wide moor, where lived some wild ducks; here he lay the whole night, so tired and so comfortless.

In the morning the wild ducks flew up, and perceived their new companion. "Pray who are you?" asked they; and our little duckling turned himself in all directions, and greeted them as politely as possible.

"You are really very ugly," said the wild ducks; "however, that does not matter to us, provided you do not marry into our families." Poor thing! he had never thought of marrying; he only begged leave to lie among the reeds, and drink the water of the moor.

There he lay for two whole days; on the third day there came two wild geese, or rather ganders, who had not been long out of their egg-shells, which accounts for their impertinence.

"Hark ye," said they, "you are so ugly that we like you infinitely well. Will you come with us, and be a bird of passage? On another moor, not far from this, are some dear, sweet, wild geese, as lovely creatures as have ever said 'hiss, hiss.' You are truly in the way to make your fortune, ugly as you are."

Bang! a gun went off all at once, and both wild geese were stretched dead among the reeds, and the water became red with blood;—bang! a gun went off again,

whole flocks of wild geese flew up from among the reeds, and another report followed.

There was a grand hunting party : the hunters lay in ambush all around ; some were even sitting in the trees, whose huge branches stretched far over the moor. The blue smoke rose through the thick trees like a mist, and was dispersed as it fell over the water ; the hounds splashed about in the mud, the reeds and rushes bent in all directions. How frightened the poor little duck was ! He turned his head, thinking to hide it under his wings ; and in a moment a most formidable-looking dog stood close to him, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, his eyes sparkling fearfully. He opened wide his jaws at the sight of our duckling, showed him his sharp white teeth, and, splash, splash ! he was gone—gone without hurting him.

“ Well ! let me be thankful,” sighed he, “ I am so ugly that even the dog will not eat me.”

And now he lay still, though the shooting continued among the reeds, shot following shot.

The noise did not cease till late in the day, and even then the poor little thing dared not stir ; he waited several hours before he looked around him, and then hastened away from the moor as fast as he could. He ran over fields and meadows, though the wind was so high that he had some difficulty in proceeding.

Towards evening he reached a wretched little hut—so wretched that it knew not on which side to fall, and therefore remained standing. The wind blew violently, so that our poor little duckling was obliged to support himself on his tail, in order to stand against it ; but it became worse and worse. He then remarked that the door had lost one of its hinges, and hung so much awry that he could creep through the crevice into the room—which he did.

In this room lived an old woman, with her tom-cat and her hen ; and the cat, whom she called her little son, knew how to set up his back and purr ; indeed he

could even emit sparks when stroked the wrong way. The hen had very short legs, and was therefore called "Cuckoo Shortlegs"; she laid very good eggs, and the old woman loved her as her own child.

The next morning the new guest was perceived; the cat began to mew, and the hen to cackle.

"What is the matter?" asked the old woman, looking round; however, her eyes were not good, and so she took the young duckling to be a fat duck who had lost her way. "This is a capital catch," said she; "I shall now have ducks' eggs, if it be not a drake: we must try."

And so the duckling was put to the proof for three weeks, but no eggs made their appearance.

Now the cat was the master of the house and the hen was the mistress, and they used always to say, "We and the world," for they imagined themselves to be not only the half of the world, but also by far the better half. The duckling thought it was possible to be of a different opinion, but that the hen would not allow.

"Can you lay eggs?" asked she.

"No."

"Well, then, hold your tongue."

And the cat said, "Can you set up your back? can you purr?"

"No."

"Well, then, you should have no opinion when reasonable persons are speaking."

So the duckling sat alone in a corner, and was in a very bad humour; however, he happened to think of the fresh air and bright sunshine, and these thoughts gave him such a strong desire to swim again that he could not help telling it to the hen.

"What ails you?" said the hen. "You have nothing to do, and, therefore, brood over these fancies; either lay eggs, or purr, then you will forget them."

"But it is so delicious to swim," said the duckling; "so delicious when the waters close over your head, and you plunge to the bottom."

"Well, that is a queer sort of a pleasure," said the hen; "I think you must be crazy. Not to speak of myself, ask the cat—he is the most sensible animal I know—whether he would like to swim or to plunge to the bottom of the water. Ask our mistress, the old woman—there is no one in the world wiser than she—do you think she would take pleasure in swimming, and in the waters closing over her head?"

"You do not understand me," said the duckling.

"What, we do not understand you! So you think yourself wiser than the cat and the old woman, not to speak of myself. Do not fancy any such thing, child, but be thankful for all the kindness that has been shown you. Are you not lodged in a warm room, and have you not the advantage of society from which you can learn something? But you are a simpleton, and it is wearisome to have anything to do with you. Believe me, I wish you well. I tell you unpleasant truths, but it is thus that real friendship is shown. Come, for once give yourself the trouble to learn to purr, or to lay eggs."

"I think I will go out into the wide world again," said the duckling.

"Well, go," answered the hen.

So the duckling went. He swam on the surface of the water, he plunged beneath, but all animals passed him by, on account of his ugliness. And the autumn came, the leaves turned yellow and brown, the wind caught them and danced them about; the air was very cold, the clouds were heavy with hail or snow, and the raven sat on the hedge and croaked. The poor duckling was certainly not very comfortable!

One evening, just as the sun was setting with unusual brilliancy, a flock of large beautiful birds rose from out of the brushwood; the duckling had never seen anything so beautiful before; their plumage was of a dazzling white, and they had long, slender necks. They were swans; they uttered a singular cry, spread out their long,

splendid wings, and flew away from these cold regions to warmer countries across the open sea. They flew so high, so very high ! and the little ugly duckling's feelings were so strange ; he turned round and round in the water like a mill-wheel, strained his neck to look after them, and sent forth such a loud and strange cry that it almost frightened himself.

Ah ! he could not forget them, those noble birds ! those happy birds ! When he could see them no longer, he plunged to the bottom of the water, and when he rose again, was almost beside himself. The duckling knew not what the birds were called, knew not whither they were flying, yet he loved them as he had never before loved anything. He envied them not ; it would never have occurred to him to wish such beauty for himself ; he would have been quite contented if the ducks in the duck-yard had only endured his company—the poor ugly animal !

And the winter was so cold, so cold ! The duckling was obliged to swim round and round in the water, to keep it from freezing ; but every night the opening in which he swam became smaller and smaller. It froze so that the crust of ice crackled ; the duckling was obliged to make good use of his legs to prevent the water from freezing entirely ; at last, wearied out, he lay stiff and cold in the ice.

Early in the morning there passed by a peasant who saw him, broke the ice in pieces with his wooden shoe, and brought him home to his wife.

He now revived ; the children would have played with him, but our duckling thought they wished to tease him, and in his terror jumped into the milk-pail, so that the milk was spilled about the room. The good woman screamed and clapped her hands ; he flew thence into the pan where the butter was kept, and thence into the meal-barrel, and out again, and then how strange he looked !

The woman screamed, and struck at him with the tongs ; the children ran races with each other trying to

catch him, and laughed and screamed likewise. It was well for him that the door stood open; he jumped out among the bushes into the new fallen snow, and lay there as in a dream.

But it would be too melancholy to relate all the trouble and misery that he was obliged to suffer during the severity of the winter. He was lying on a moor among the reeds, when the sun began to shine warmly again; the larks sang, and beautiful spring had returned.

And once more he shook his wings. They were stronger than formerly, and bore him forwards quickly; and before he was well aware of it, he was in a large garden where the apple-trees stood in full bloom, where the syringas sent forth their fragrance and hung their long green branches down into the winding canal. Oh! everything was so lovely, so full of the freshness of spring! And out of the thicket came three beautiful white swans. They displayed their feathers so proudly, and swam so lightly, so lightly! The duckling knew the glorious creatures, and was seized with a strange melancholy.

"I will fly to them, those kingly birds!" said he. "They will kill me, because I, ugly as I am, have presumed to approach them; but it matters not, better to be killed by them than to be bitten by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the girl who feeds the poultry, and to have so much to suffer during the winter!" He flew into the water, and swam towards the beautiful creatures; they saw him and shot forward to meet him. "Only kill me," said the poor animal, and he bowed his head low, expecting death. But what did he see in the water? He saw beneath him his own form, no longer that of a plump, ugly gray bird—it was that of a swan.

It matters not to have been born in a duck-yard, if one has been hatched from a swan's egg.

The good creature felt himself really elevated by all the troubles and adversities he had experienced. He could now rightly estimate his own happiness, and the larger swans swam round him, and stroked him with their beaks.

Some little children were running about in the garden ; they threw grain and bread into the water, and the youngest exclaimed, " There is a new one ! " The others also cried out, " Yes, a new swan has come ! " and they clapped their hands, and danced around. They ran to their father and mother, bread and cake were thrown into the water, and every one said, " The new one is the best, so young, and so beautiful ! " and the old swans bowed before him.

The young swan felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wings ; he scarcely knew what to do, he was all too happy, but still not proud—for a good heart is never proud.

He remembered how he had been persecuted and scorned, and he now heard every one say he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. The syringas bent down their branches towards him low into the water, and the sun shone warmly and brightly. He shook his feathers, stretched his slender neck, and in the joy of his heart said, " How little did I dream of so much happiness when I was the ugly, despised duckling ! "

THE LITTLE MERMAID.

FAR out in the wide sea—where the water is blue as the loveliest cornflower, and clear as the purest crystal ; where it is so deep that very many church-towers must be heaped one upon another, in order to reach from the lowest depth to the surface above—dwell the Mer-people.

Now you must not imagine that there is nothing but sand below the water : no, indeed, far from it ! Trees and plants of wondrous beauty grow there, whose stems and leaves are so light that they are waved to and fro by the slightest motion of the water, almost as if they were living beings. Fishes, great and small, glide in and out among the branches, just as birds fly about among our trees.

Where the water is deepest, stands the palace of the Mer-king. The walls of this palace are of coral, and the high, pointed windows are of amber ; the roof, however, is composed of mussel-shells, which, as the billows pass over them, are continually opening and shutting. This looks exceedingly pretty, especially as each of these mussel-shells contains a number of bright, glittering pearls, any one of which would be a costly ornament in the diadem of a king in the upper world.

The Mer-king had been for many years a widower ; his old mother managed the household affairs for him. She was, on the whole, a sensible sort of a lady, although extremely proud of her high birth and station ; on which account she wore twelve oysters on her tail, whilst the other inhabitants of the sea were allowed only six. In every other respect she merited unlimited praise, especially for the affection she showed to the six little princesses, her granddaughters. These were all very beautiful children : the youngest was, however, the most lovely ; her skin was as soft and delicate as a rose-leaf, her eyes were of as deep a blue as the sea ; but, like all other mermaids, she had no feet, and her body ended in a tail like that of a fish.

The whole day long the children used to play in the spacious apartments of the palace, where beautiful flowers grew out of the walls on all sides around them. When the great amber windows were opened, fishes would swim into these apartments as swallows fly into our rooms : but the fishes were bolder than the swallows ; they swam straight up to the little princesses, ate from their hands, and allowed themselves to be caressed.

In front of the palace there was a large garden full of fiery red and dark blue trees, whose fruit glittered like gold, and whose flowers resembled a bright, burning sun. The sand that formed the soil of the garden was of a bright blue colour, something like flames of sulphur ; and a strangely beautiful blue was spread over the whole, so that one might have fancied one's-self raised very

high in the air, with the sky at once above and below—certainly not at the bottom of the sea. When the waters were quite still, the sun might be seen looking like a purple flower, out of whose cup streamed forth the light of the world.

Each of the little princesses had her own plot in the garden, where she might plant and sow at her pleasure. One chose hers to be made in the shape of a whale; another preferred the figure of a mermaid; but the youngest had hers quite round like the sun, and planted in it only those flowers that were red, as the sun seemed to her. She was certainly a singular child, very quiet and thoughtful. Whilst her sisters were adorning themselves with all sorts of gay things that came out of a ship which had been wrecked, she asked for nothing but a beautiful white marble statue of a boy, which had been found in it. She put the statue in her garden, and planted a red weeping-willow by its side. The tree grew up quickly, and let its long boughs fall upon the bright blue ground, where ever-moving shadows played in violet hues, as if boughs and root were embracing.

Nothing pleased the little princess more than to hear about the world of human beings living above the sea. She made her old grandmother tell her everything she knew about ships, towns, men, and land animals, and was particularly pleased when she heard that the flowers of the upper world had a pleasant fragrance—for the flowers of the sea are scentless—and that the woods were green, and the fishes fluttering among the branches were of various gay colours, and that they could sing with a loud clear voice. The old lady meant birds, but she called them fishes, because her grandchildren, having never seen a bird, would not otherwise have understood her.

“When you have attained your fifteenth year,” added she, “you will be permitted to rise to the surface of the sea; you will then sit by moonlight in the clefts of the rocks, see the ships sail by, and learn to distinguish towns and men.”

The next year the eldest of the sisters reached this happy age, but the others—alas! The second sister was a year younger than the eldest, the third a year younger than the second, and so on; the youngest had still five whole years to wait till that joyful time should come, when she also might rise to the surface of the water and see what was going on in the upper world. However, the eldest promised to tell the others of everything she might see, when the first day of her being of age arrived; for the grandmother gave them but little information, and there was so much that they wished to hear.

But none of all the sisters longed so keenly for the day when she should be released from childish restraint as the youngest—she who had longest to wait, and was so quiet and thoughtful. Many a night she stood by the open window, looking up through the clear blue water, whilst the fishes were leaping and playing around her. She could see the sun and the moon; their light was pale, but they appeared larger than they do to those who live in the upper world. If a shadow passed over them, she knew it must be either a whale, or a ship sailing by full of human beings, who, indeed, little thought that, far beneath them, a little mermaiden was passionately stretching forth her white hands towards their ship's keel.

The day had now arrived when the eldest princess had attained her fifteenth year, and was therefore allowed to rise up to the surface of the sea.

When she returned she had a thousand things to relate. Her chief pleasure had been to sit upon a sandbank in the moonlight, looking at the large town which lay on the coast, where lights were beaming like stars, and where music was playing. She had heard the distant noise of men and carriages; she had seen the high church-towers, had listened to the ringing of the bells; and, just because she could not go there, she longed the more after all these things.

How attentively did her youngest sister listen to her

words ! And when she next stood at night-time by her open window, gazing upward through the blue waters, she thought so intensely of the great noisy city that she fancied she could hear the church-bells ringing.

Next year the second sister received permission to swim wherever she pleased. She rose to the surface of the sea, just when the sun was setting ; and this sight so delighted her, that she declared it to be more beautiful than anything else she had seen above the waters.

"The whole sky seemed tinged with gold," said she, "and it is impossible for me to describe to you the beauty of the clouds : now red, now violet, they glided over me. But still more swiftly flew over the water a flock of white swans, just where the sun was descending ; I looked after them, but the sun disappeared, and the bright rosy light on the surface of the sea and on the edges of the clouds was gradually extinguished."

It was now time for the third sister to visit the upper world. She was the boldest of the six, and ventured up a river. On its shore she saw green hills covered with woods and vineyards, from among which arose houses and castles ; she heard the birds singing, and the sun shone with so much power that she was continually obliged to plunge below, in order to cool her burning face. In a little bay she met with a number of children, who were bathing and jumping about ; she would have joined in their gambols, but the children fled back to land in great terror, and a little black animal barked at her in such a manner, that she herself was frightened at last, and swam back to the sea. She could not, however, forget the green woods, and the hills, and the pretty children, who, although they had no fins, were swimming about in the river so fearlessly.

The fourth sister was not so bold ; she remained in the open sea, and said, on her return home, she thought nothing could be more beautiful. She had seen ships sailing by, so far off that they looked like sea-gulls ; she had watched the merry dolphins gamboling in the

water, and the enormous whales, sending up into the air a thousand sparkling fountains.

The year after, the fifth sister attained her fifteenth year. Her birthday happened at a different season to that of her sisters; it was winter, the sea was of a green colour, and immense icebergs were floating on its surface. These, she said, looked like pearls; they were, however, much larger than the church-towers in the land of human beings. She sat down upon one of these pearls, and let the wind play with her long hair; but then all the ships hoisted their sails in terror, and escaped as quickly as possible.

In the evening the sky was covered with sails; and whilst the great mountains of ice alternately sank and rose again, and beamed with a reddish glow, flashes of lightning burst forth from the clouds, and the thunder rolled on, peal after peal. The sails of all the ships were instantly furled, and horror and affright reigned on board, but the princess sat still on the iceberg, looking unconcernedly at the blue zig-zag of the flashes.

The first time that either of these sisters rose out of the sea, she was quite enchanted at the sight of so many new and beautiful objects; but the novelty was soon over, and it was not long ere their own home appeared more attractive than the upper world, for there only did they find everything agreeable.

Many an evening would the five sisters rise hand in hand from the depths of the ocean. Their voices were far sweeter than any human voice, and when a storm was coming on, they would swim in front of the ships and sing—oh! how sweetly did they sing! describing the happiness of those who lived at the bottom of the sea, and entreating the sailors not to be afraid, but to come down to them.

The mariners, however, did not understand their words; they fancied the song was only the whistling of the wind, and thus they lost the hidden glories of the sea: for if their ships were wrecked, all on board

were drowned, and none but dead men ever entered the Mer-king's palace.

Whilst the sisters were swimming at evening time, the youngest would remain, motionless and alone, in her father's palace, looking up after them. She would have wept, but mermaids cannot weep, and therefore, when they are troubled, suffer infinitely more than human beings do.

"Oh! if I were but fifteen," sighed she, "I know that I should love the upper world and its inhabitants so much."

At last the time she had so longed for arrived.

"Well, now it is your turn," said the grandmother; "come here that I may adorn you like your sisters." And she wound around her hair a wreath of white lilies, whose every petal was the half of a pearl, and then commanded eight large oysters to fasten themselves to the princess's tail, in token of her high rank.

"But that is so very uncomfortable!" said the little princess.

"One must not mind slight inconveniences when one wishes to look well," said the old lady.

The princess would have given up all this splendour, and exchanged her heavy crown for the red flowers of her garden, which were so much more becoming to her, but she dared not do so. "Farewell," said she; and she rose from the sea, light as a flake of foam.

When, for the first time in her life, she appeared on the surface of the water, the sun had just sunk below the horizon, the clouds were beaming with bright golden and rosy hues, the evening star was shining in the pale western sky, the air was mild and refreshing, and the sea as smooth as a looking-glass. A large ship with three masts lay on the still waters; only one sail was unfurled, but not a breath was stirring, and the sailors were quietly seated on the cordage and ladders of the vessel. Music and song resounded from the deck, and after it grew dark, hundreds of lamps, all on a sudden,

burst forth into light, whilst innumerable flags were fluttering overhead.

The little mermaid swam close up to the captain's cabin, and every now and then, when the ship was raised by the motion of the water, she could look through the clear window-panes. She saw within, many richly-dressed men; the handsomest among them was a young prince with large black eyes. He could not certainly be more than sixteen years old, and it was in honour of his birthday that a grand festival was being celebrated. The crew were dancing on the deck, and when the young prince appeared among them a hundred rockets were sent up into the air, turning night into day, and so terrifying the little mermaid, that for some minutes she plunged beneath the water.

However, she soon raised her little head again, and then it seemed as if all the stars were falling down upon her. Such a fiery shower she had never even seen before; never had she heard that men possessed such wonderful powers. Large suns revolved around her, bright fishes swam in the air, and everything was reflected perfectly on the clear surface of the sea. It was so light in the ship that everything could be seen distinctly. Oh! how happy the young prince was! He shook hands with the sailors, laughed and jested with them, whilst sweet notes of music mingled with the silence of night.

It was now late, but the little mermaid could not tear herself away from the ship and the handsome young prince. She remained looking through the cabin window, rocked to and fro by the waves. There was a foaming in the depths beneath, and the ship began to move on faster; the sails were spread, the waves rose high, thick clouds gathered over the sky, and the noise of distant thunder was heard.

The sailors perceived that a storm was coming on; so they again furled the sails. The great vessel was tossed about on the stormy ocean like a light boat, and the waves

rose to an immense height, towering over the ship, which alternately sank beneath and rose above them.

To the little mermaid this seemed most delightful, but the ship's crew thought very differently. The vessel cracked, the stout masts bent under the violence of the billows, the waters rushed in. For a minute the ship tottered to and fro; then the mainmast broke, as if it had been a reed; the ship turned over, and was filled with water. The little mermaid now saw that the crew was in danger, for she herself was forced to beware of the beams and splinters torn from the vessel, and floating about on the waves.

But at the same time it became pitch dark, so that she could not distinguish anything. Presently, however, a dreadful flash of lightning disclosed to her the whole of the wreck. Her eyes sought the young prince—the same instant the ship sank to the bottom. At first she was delighted, thinking that the prince must now come to her abode; but she soon remembered that man cannot live in water, and that therefore if the prince ever entered her palace, it would be as a corpse.

“Die! no, he must not die!” She swam through the fragments with which the water was strewn, regardless of the danger she was incurring, and at last found the prince all but exhausted, and with great difficulty keeping his head above water. He had already closed his eyes, and must surely have been drowned, had not the little mermaid come to his rescue. She seized hold of him and kept him above water, and the current bore them on together.

Towards morning the storm was hushed; no trace, however, remained of the ship. The sun rose like fire out of the sea; his beams seemed to restore colour to the prince's cheeks, but his eyes were still closed. The mermaid kissed his high forehead, and stroked his wet hair away from his face. He looked like the marble statue in her garden. She kissed him again, and wished most fervently that he might recover.

She now saw the dry land with its mountains glittering with snow. A green wood extended along the coast, and at the entrance of the wood stood a chapel or convent—she could not be sure which. Citron and lemon trees grew in the garden adjoining it, an avenue of tall palm-trees led up to the door. The sea here formed a little bay, in which the water was quite smooth but very deep, and under the cliffs there were dry firm sands. Hither swam the little mermaid with the prince seemingly dead; she laid him upon the warm sand, and took care to place his head high, and to turn his face to the sun.

The bells began to ring in the large white building which stood before her, and a number of young girls came out to walk in the garden. The mermaid went away from the shore, hid herself behind some stones, covered her head with foam, so that her little face could not be seen, and watched the prince.

It was not long before one of the young girls approached. She seemed quite frightened at finding the prince in this state, apparently dead. Soon, however, she recovered herself, and ran back to call her sisters. The little mermaid saw that the prince revived, and that all around smiled kindly and joyfully upon him. For her, however, he looked not; he knew not that it was she who had saved him: and when the prince was taken into the house, she felt so sad that she immediately plunged beneath the water, and returned to her father's palace.

If she had before been quiet and thoughtful, she now grew still more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen in the upper world, but she made no answer.

Many an evening she rose to the place where she had left the prince. She saw the snow melt on the mountains, the fruits ripen in the garden, but the prince she never saw; so she always returned sorrowfully to her home in the deep. Her only pleasure was to sit in her little garden gazing on the beautiful statue so like the prince. She cared no longer for her flowers; they grew up in wild luxuriance, covered the steps, and entwined their long

stems and tendrils among the boughs of the trees, so that her whole garden became a bower.

At last, being unable to conceal her sorrow any longer, she revealed the secret to one of her sisters, who told it to the other princesses, and they to some of their friends. Among them was a young mermaid who recollected the prince, having been an eye-witness herself to the festivities in the ship; she knew also in what country the prince lived, and the name of its king.

“Come, little sister!” said the princesses; and embracing her, they rose together, arm-in-arm, out of the water, just in front of the prince’s palace.

This palace was built of bright yellow stones, a flight of white marble steps led from it down to the sea. A gilded cupola crowned the building, and white marble figures, which might almost have been taken for real men and women, were placed among the pillars surrounding it. Through the clear glass of the high windows one might look into grand apartments hung with silken curtains, the walls adorned with magnificent paintings. It was a real treat to the little royal mermaids to behold so splendid an abode; they gazed through the windows of one of the largest rooms, and in the centre saw a fountain playing, whose waters sprang up to the glittering cupola above, through which the sunbeams fell dancing on the water, and brightening the pretty plants which grew around it.

The little mermaid now knew where her beloved prince dwelt, and henceforth she went there almost every evening. She often approached nearer the land than her sisters had ventured, and even swam up the narrow channel that flowed under the marble balcony. Here, on a bright moonlight night, she would watch the young prince, who believed himself alone.

Sometimes she saw him sailing on the water in a gaily-painted boat with many-coloured flags waving above. She would then hide among the green reeds which grew on the banks, listening to his voice; and if any one in the boat heard the rustling of her long

silver veil, which was caught now and then by the light breeze, they only fancied it was a swan flapping his wings.

Many a night when the fishermen were casting their nets by the beacon's light, she heard them talking of the prince, and telling the noble deeds he had performed. She was then so happy, thinking how she had saved his life when struggling with the waves, and remembering how his head had rested on her bosom, and how she had kissed him when he knew nothing of it, and could never even dream of such a thing.

Human beings became more and more dear to her every day ; she wished that she were one of them. Their world seemed to her much larger than that of the Mer-people ; they could fly over the ocean in their ships, as well as climb to the summits of those high mountains that rose above the clouds ; and their wooded domains extended much farther than a mermaid's eye could see.

There were many things that she wished to hear explained, but her sisters could not give her any satisfactory answer. She was again obliged to have recourse to the old queen-mother, who knew a great deal about the upper world, which she used to call "the country above the sea."

"Do men when they are not drowned live for ever?" she asked one day. "Do they not die as we do, who live at the bottom of the sea?"

"Yes," was the grandmother's reply ; "they must die like us, and their life is much shorter than ours. We live to the age of three hundred years, but when we die, we become foam on the sea, and are not allowed even to share a grave among those that are dear to us. We have no immortal souls ; we can never live again, and are like the grass which, when once cut down, is withered for ever. Human beings, on the contrary, have souls that continue to live when their bodies become dust ; and as we rise out of the water to admire the homes of man, they ascend to glorious

unknown dwellings in the skies which we are not permitted to see."

"Why have *we* not souls?" asked the little mermaid. "I would willingly give up my three hundred years to be a human being for only one day, thus to become entitled to that heavenly world above."

"You must not think of that," answered her grandmother; "it is much better as it is: we live longer and are far happier than human beings."

"So I must die, and be dashed like foam over the sea, never to rise again and hear the gentle murmur of the ocean—never again see the beautiful flowers and the bright sun! Tell me, dear grandmother, are there no means by which I may obtain an immortal soul?"

"No!" replied the old lady. "It is true that if thou couldst so win the affections of a human being as to become dearer to him than either father or mother; if he loved thee with all his heart, and promised whilst the priest joined his hands with thine to be always faithful to thee; then his soul would flow into thine, and thou wouldst then become partaker of human bliss. But that can never be! For what in our eyes is the most beautiful part of our body—the tail—the inhabitants of the earth think hideous—they cannot bear it. To appear handsome to them, the body must have two clumsy props which they call legs."

The little mermaid sighed and looked mournfully at the scaly part of her form, otherwise so fair and delicate.

"We are happy," added the old lady; "we shall jump and swim about merrily for three hundred years—that is a long time—and afterwards we shall repose peacefully in death. This evening we have a court ball."

The ball which the queen-mother spoke of was far more splendid than any that earth has ever seen. The walls of the saloon were of crystal, very thick, but yet very clear. Hundreds of large mussel-shells were planted along them in rows; some of these shells were rose-coloured, some green as grass, but all sent forth a bright

light, which illuminated the whole apartment. They also shone through the glassy walls so as to light up the waters around for a great space, and made the scales of the fishes—great and small, crimson and purple, silver and gold-coloured—appear more brilliant than ever.

Through the centre of the saloon flowed a bright, clear stream, on the surface of which danced mermen and mermaids to the melody of their own sweet voices—voices far sweeter than those of the dwellers upon earth. The little princess sang more harmoniously than any other, and they clapped their hands and applauded her.

She was pleased at this, for she knew well that there was neither on earth nor in the sea a more beautiful voice than hers. But her thoughts soon returned to the world above her : she could not forget the handsome prince ; she could not control her sorrow at not having an immortal soul. She stole away from her father's palace, and whilst all was joy within, she sat alone, lost in thought, in her little neglected garden.

On a sudden she heard the tones of horns resounding over the water far away in the distance, and she said to herself, "Now he is going out to hunt—he whom I love more than my father and my mother, with whom my thoughts are constantly occupied, and to whom I would so willingly trust the happiness of my life ! All ! all, will I risk to win him—and an immortal soul ! Whilst my sisters are still dancing in the palace, I will go to the enchantress whom I have hitherto feared so much, but who is, nevertheless, the only person who can advise and help me."

So the little mermaid left the garden, and went to the foaming whirlpool beyond which dwelt the enchantress. She had never been this way before—neither flowers nor sea-grass bloomed along her path. She had to traverse an expanse of bare gray sand till she reached the whirlpool, whose waters were eddying and whizzing like mill-wheels, tearing everything they could seize along with them into the abyss below. She was obliged to

make her way through this horrible place, in order to arrive at the territory of the enchantress. Then she had to pass through a boiling, slimy bog, which the enchantress called her turf-moor: her house stood in a wood beyond this, and a strange abode it was.

All the trees and bushes around were polypi, looking like hundred-headed serpents shooting up out of the ground; their branches were long slimy arms with fingers of worms, every member, from the root to the uttermost tip, ceaselessly moving and extending on all sides. Whatever they seized they fastened upon so that it could not loosen itself from their grasp.

The little mermaid stood still for a minute looking at this horrible wood; her heart beat with fear, and she would certainly have returned without attaining her object, had she not remembered the prince—and immortality. The thought gave her new courage. She bound up her long waving hair, that the polypi might not catch hold of it, crossed her delicate arms over her bosom, and, swifter than a fish can glide through the water, she passed these unseemly trees, which stretched their eager arms after her in vain.

She could not, however, help seeing that every polypus had something in his grasp, held as firmly by a thousand little arms as if inclosed by iron bands. The whitened skeletons of a number of human beings who had been drowned in the sea, and had sunk into the abyss, grinned horribly from the arms of these polypi; helms, chests, skeletons of land animals were also held in their embrace. Among other things might be seen even a little mermaid whom they had seized and strangled! What a fearful sight for the unfortunate princess!

But she got safely through this wood of horrors, and then arrived at a slimy place, where huge, fat snails were crawling about, and in the midst of this place stood a house built of the bones of unfortunate people who had been shipwrecked. Here sat the witch caressing a toad in the same manner as some persons would a pet bird.

The ugly fat snails she called her chickens, and she permitted them to crawl about her.

"I know well what you would ask of me," said she to the little princess. "Your wish is foolish enough, but it shall be fulfilled, though its accomplishment is sure to bring misfortune on you, my fairest princess. You wish to get rid of your tail, and to have instead two stilts like those of human beings, in order that a young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may obtain an immortal soul. Is it not so?"

While the witch spoke these words, she laughed so violently that her pet toad and snails fell from her lap.

"You come just at the right time," continued she; "had you come after sunset, it would not have been in my power to have helped you before another year. I will prepare for you a drink with which you must swim to land; you must sit down upon the shore and swallow it, and then your tail will fall and shrink up to the things which men call legs. This transformation will, however, be very painful; you will feel as though a sharp knife passed through your body. All who look on you after you have been thus changed will say that you are the loveliest child of earth they have ever seen; you will retain your graceful movements, and no dancer will move so lightly: but every step you take will cause you pain all but unbearable—it will seem to you as if you were walking on the sharp edges of swords—and your blood will flow. Can you endure all this suffering? If so, I will grant your request."

"Yes, I will," answered the princess, with a faltering voice; for she remembered her dear prince, and the immortal soul which her suffering might win.

"Only consider," said the witch, "that you can never again become a mermaid, when once you have received a human form. You may never return to your sisters, and your father's palace; and unless you shall win the prince's love to such a degree that he shall leave father and mother for you, that you shall be mixed up

with all his thoughts and wishes, and unless the priest join your hands, so that you become man and wife, you will never obtain the immortality you seek. The morrow of the day on which he is united to another, will see your death; your heart will break with sorrow, and you will be changed to foam on the sea."

"Still I will venture!" said the little mermaid, pale and trembling as a dying person.

"Besides all this, I must be paid, and it is no slight thing that I require for my trouble. Thou hast the sweetest voice of all the dwellers in the sea, and thou thinkest by its means to charm the prince; this voice, however, I demand as my recompense. The best thing thou possessest I require in exchange for my magic drink; for I shall be obliged to sacrifice my own blood, in order to give it the sharpness of a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice from me," said the princess, "what have I left with which to charm the prince?"

"Thy graceful form," replied the witch; "thy modest gait, and speaking eyes. With such as these, it will be easy to infatuate a vain human heart. Well now! hast thou lost courage? Put out thy little tongue, that I may cut it off, and take it for myself, in return for my magic drink."

"Be it so!" said the princess, and the witch took up her cauldron, in order to mix her potion. "Cleanliness is a good thing," remarked she, as she began to rub the cauldron with a handful of toads and snails. She then scratched her bosom, and let the black blood trickle down into the cauldron, every moment throwing in new ingredients. The smoke from the mixture assumed such horrible forms, as would fill beholders with terror, and a moaning and groaning proceeded from it, which might be compared to the weeping of crocodiles. The magic drink at length became clear and transparent as pure water: it was ready.

"Here it is!" said the witch to the princess, cutting

out her tongue at the same moment. The poor little mermaid was now dumb: she could neither sing nor speak. "If the polypi should attempt to seize you, as you pass through my little grove," said the witch, "you have only to sprinkle some of this magic drink over them, and their arms will burst into a thousand pieces."

But the princess had no need of this counsel, for the polypi drew hastily back as soon as they perceived the bright phial, that glittered in her hand like a star; thus she passed safely through the formidable wood over the moor, and across the foaming mill-stream.

She now looked once again at her father's palace; the lamps in the saloon were out, and all the family were asleep. She would not go in, for she could not speak if she did; she was about to leave her home for ever; her heart was ready to break with sorrow at the thought. She stole into the garden, plucked a flower from the bed of each of her sisters as a remembrance, kissed her hand again and again, and then rose through the dark blue waters to the world above.

The sun had not yet risen when she arrived at the prince's dwelling, and ascended those well-known marble steps. The moon still shone in the sky when the little mermaid drank of the wonderful liquid contained in her phial. She felt it run through her like a sharp knife, and she fell down in a swoon. When the sun rose she awoke, and felt a burning pain in all her limbs; but—she saw standing close to her the object of her love, the handsome young prince, whose coal-black eyes were fixed inquiringly upon her. Full of shame she cast down her own, and perceived, instead of the long fish-like tail she had hitherto borne, two slender legs; but she was quite naked, and tried in vain to cover herself with her long thick hair.

The prince asked who she was, and how she had got there; and she, in reply, smiled and gazed upon him with her bright blue eyes, for alas! she could not speak. He then led her by the hand into the palace. She found

that the witch had told her true ; she felt as though she were walking on the edges of sharp swords, but she bore the pain willingly. On she passed, light as a zephyr, and all who saw her wondered at her light, graceful movements.

When she entered the palace, rich clothes of muslin and silk were brought to her ; she was lovelier than all who dwelt there, but she could neither speak nor sing. Some female slaves, gaily dressed in silk and gold brocade, sang before the prince and his royal parents ; and one of them distinguished herself by her clear, sweet voice, which the prince applauded by clapping his hands. This made the little mermaid very sad, for she knew that she used to sing far better than the young slave. "Alas !" thought she, "if he did but know that, for his sake, I have given away my voice for ever."

The slaves began to dance ; our lovely little mermaiden then arose, stretched out her delicate white arms, and hovered gracefully about the room. Every motion displayed more and more the perfect symmetry and elegance of her figure ; and the expression which beamed in her speaking eyes touched the hearts of the spectators far more than the song of the slaves.

All present were enchanted, but especially the young prince, who called her his dear little foundling. And she danced again and again, although every step cost her excessive pain. The prince then said she should always be with him ; and accordingly a sleeping-place was prepared for her on velvet cushions in the anteroom of his own apartment.

The prince caused a suit of male apparel to be made for her, in order that she might accompany him in his rides ; so together they traversed the fragrant woods, where green boughs brushed against their shoulders, and the birds sang merrily among the fresh leaves. With him she climbed up steep mountains, and although her tender feet bled, so as to be remarked by the attendants, she only smiled, and followed her dear

prince to the heights, whence they could see the clouds chasing each other beneath them, like a flock of birds migrating to other countries.

During the night she would, when all in the palace were at rest, walk down the marble steps, in order to cool her feet in the deep waters; she would then think of those beloved ones who dwelt in the lower world.

One night, as she was thus bathing her feet, her sisters swam together to the spot, arm-in-arm and singing, but alas! so mournfully! She beckoned to them, and they immediately recognised her, and told her how great was the mourning in her father's house for her loss. From this time the sisters visited her every night; and once they brought with them the old grandmother, who had not seen the upper world for a great many years; they likewise brought their father, the Mer-king, with his crown on his head: but these two old people did not venture near enough to land to be able to speak to her.

The little mermaiden became dearer and dearer to the prince every day; but he only looked upon her as a sweet, gentle child, and the thought of making her his wife never entered his head. And yet his wife she must be, ere she could receive an immortal soul; his wife she must be, or she would change into foam, and be driven restlessly over the billows of the sea!

"Dost thou not love me above all others?" her eyes seemed to ask, as he pressed her fondly in his arms, and kissed her lovely brow.

"Yes," the prince would say; "thou art dearer to me than any other, for no one is as good as thou art! Thou lovest me so much; and thou art so like a young maiden whom I have seen but once, and may never see again. I was on board a ship which was wrecked by a sudden tempest; the waves threw me on the shore near a holy temple, where a number of young girls are occupied constantly with religious services. The youngest of them found me on the shore, and saved my life. I saw her only once, but her image is vividly impressed upon my memory,

and her alone can I love. But she belongs to the holy temple ; and thou who resemblest her so much hast been given to me for consolation : never will we be parted ! ”

“ Alas ! he does not know that it was I who saved his life,” thought the little mermaiden, sighing deeply. “ I bore him over the wild waves into the wooded bay where the holy temple stood ; I sat behind the rocks, waiting till some one should come. I saw the pretty maiden approach, whom he loves more than me ”—and again she heaved a deep sigh, for she could not weep. “ He said that the young girl belongs to the holy temple ; she never comes out into the world : so they cannot meet each other again. And I am always with him, see him daily ; I will love him, and devote my whole life to him.”

“ So the prince is going to be married to the beautiful daughter of the neighbouring king,” said the courtiers, “ that is why he is having that splendid ship fitted out. It is announced that he wishes to travel, but in reality he goes to see the princess ; a numerous retinue will accompany him.” The little mermaiden smiled at these and similar conjectures, for she knew the prince’s intentions better than any one else.

“ I must go,” he said to her ; “ I must see the beautiful princess : my parents require me to do so ; but they will not compel me to marry her, and bring her home as my bride. And it is quite impossible for me to love her, for she cannot be so like the beautiful girl in the temple as thou art ; and if I were obliged to choose, I should prefer thee, my little silent foundling, with the speaking eyes.” And he kissed her rosy lips, played with her locks, and folded her in his arms, whereupon arose in her heart a sweet vision of human happiness and immortal bliss.

“ Thou art not afraid of the sea, art thou, my sweet, silent child ? ” asked he tenderly, as they stood together in the splendid ship which was to take them to the country of the neighbouring king. And then he told her of the storms that sometimes stir the waters ; of the strange fishes that inhabit the deep, and of the wonderful things

seen by divers. But she smiled at his words, for she knew better than any child of earth what went on in the depths of the ocean.

At night-time, when the moon shone brightly, and when all on board were fast asleep, she sat and looked down into the sea. It seemed to her, as she gazed through the foamy track made by the ship's keel, that she saw her father's palace, and her grandmother's silver crown. She then saw her sisters rise out of the water, looking sorrowful and stretching out their hands towards her. She nodded to them, smiled, and would have explained that everything was going on quite according to her wishes ; but just then the cabin boy approached, upon which the sisters plunged beneath the water so suddenly that the boy thought what he had seen on the waves was nothing but foam.

The next morning the ship entered the harbour of the king's capital. Bells were rung, trumpets sounded, and soldiers marched in procession through the city, with waving banners, and glittering bayonets. Every day witnessed some new entertainments ; balls and parties followed each other. The princess, however, was not yet in the town ; she had been sent to a distant convent for education, and had there been taught the practice of all royal virtues. At last she arrived at the palace.

The little mermaid had been anxious to see this wonderful princess ; and she was now obliged to confess that she had never before seen so beautiful a creature.

The skin of the princess was so white and delicate that the veins might be seen through it, and her dark eyes sparkled beneath a pair of finely-formed eyebrows.

"It is herself !" exclaimed the prince, when they met ; "it is she who saved my life, when I lay like a corpse on the seashore !" and he pressed his blushing bride to his beating heart.—"Oh, I am all too happy !" said he to his dumb foundling. "What I never dared to hope for has come to pass. Thou must rejoice in my happiness, for thou lovest me more than all others who surround me."

And the little mermaid kissed his hand in silent sorrow; it seemed to her as if her heart was breaking already, although the morrow of his marriage day, which must of necessity see her death, had not yet dawned.

Again the church-bells rang, whilst heralds rode through the streets of the capital, to announce the approaching bridal. Odorous flames burned in silver candlesticks on all the altars; the priests swung their golden censers; and bride and bridegroom joined hands, while the holy words that united them were spoken.

The little mermaid, clad in silk and cloth of gold, stood behind the princess, and held the train of the bridal dress. But her ear heard nothing of the solemn music; her eye saw not the holy ceremony: she remembered her approaching end; she remembered that she had lost both this world and the next.

That very same evening, bride and bridegroom went on board the ship. Cannon were fired, flags waved with the breeze, and in the centre of the deck stood a magnificent pavilion of purple and cloth of gold, fitted up with the richest and softest couches. Here the princely pair were to spend the night. A favourable wind swelled the sails, and the ship glided lightly over the blue waters.

As soon as it was dark, coloured lamps were hung out, and dancing began on the deck. The little mermaid was thus reminded of what she had seen the first time she rose to the upper world. The spectacle that now presented itself was equally splendid — and she was obliged to join in the dance, hovering lightly as a bird over the ship boards. All applauded her, for never had she danced with more enchanting grace. Her little feet suffered extremely, but she no longer felt the pain; the anguish her heart suffered was much greater.

It was the last evening she might see him, for whose sake she had forsaken her home and all her family, had given away her beautiful voice, and suffered daily the most violent pain — all without his having the least suspicion of it. It was the last evening that she might

breathe the same atmosphere in which he, the beloved one, lived; the last evening when she might behold the deep blue sea, and the starry heavens. An eternal night, in which she might neither think nor dream, awaited her. And all was joy in the ship; and she, her heart filled with thoughts of death and annihilation, smiled and danced with the others, till past midnight. Then the prince kissed his lovely bride, and arm-in-arm they entered the magnificent tent, prepared for their repose.

All was now still; the steersman alone stood at the ship's helm. The little mermaid leaned her white arms on the gallery, and looked towards the east, watching for the dawn; she well knew that the first sunbeam would witness her death. She saw her sisters rise out of the sea; their features were deadly pale; and their long hair no more fluttered over their shoulders—it had all been cut off.

“We have given it to the witch,” said they, “to induce her to help thee, so that thou mayest not die. She has given to us a penknife: here it is! Before the sun rises, thou must plunge it into the prince's heart; and when his warm blood trickles down upon thy feet they will again be changed to a fish-like tail. Thou wilt once more become a mermaid, and wilt live thy full three hundred years, ere thou changest to foam on the sea. But hasten! either he or thou must die before sunrise.

“Our aged mother mourns for thee so much, her gray hair has fallen off through sorrow, as ours fell before the scissors of the witch. Kill the prince, and come down to us! Hasten! hasten! dost thou not see the red streaks on the eastern sky, announcing the near approach of the sun? A few minutes more and he rises, and then all will be over with thee.”

At these words they sighed deeply and vanished.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple curtains of the pavilion, where lay the bride and bridegroom; bending over them, she kissed the prince's forehead, and then glancing at the sky, she saw that the dawning light

became every moment brighter. The prince's lips murmured the name of his bride—he was dreaming of her, and her only, whilst the fatal penknife trembled in the hand of the unhappy mermaid.

All at once she threw far out into the sea that instrument of death ; the waves rose like bright blazing flames around, and the water where it fell seemed tinged with blood. With eyes fast becoming dim and fixed, she looked once more at her beloved prince ; then plunged from the ship into the sea, and felt her body slowly but surely dissolving into foam.

The sun rose from his watery bed ; his beams fell so softly and warmly upon her that our little mermaid was scarcely sensible of dying. She still saw the glorious sun, and over her head hovered a thousand beautiful, transparent forms ; she could still distinguish the white sails of the ship, and the bright red clouds in the sky. The voices of those airy creatures above her had a melody so sweet and soothing that a human ear would be as little able to catch the sound as her eye was capable of distinguishing their forms ; they hovered around her without wings, borne by their own lightness through the air. The little mermaid at last saw that she had a body as transparent as theirs ; and felt herself raised gradually from the foam of the sea to higher regions.

“Where are they taking me?” asked she, and her words sounded just like the voices of those heavenly beings.

“Speak you to the daughters of air?” was the answer. “The mermaid has no immortal soul, and can only acquire that heavenly gift by winning the love of one of the sons of men ; her immortality depends upon union with man.

“Neither do the daughters of air possess immortal souls, but they can acquire them by their own good deeds. We fly to hot countries, where the children of earth are sinking under sultry pestilential breezes ; our fresh cooling breath revives them. We diffuse ourselves through

the atmosphere; we perfume it with the delicious fragrance of flowers; and thus spread delight and health over the earth. By doing good in this manner for three hundred years we win immortality, and receive a share of the eternal bliss of human beings. And thou, poor little mermaid! who, following the impulse of thine own heart, hast done and suffered so much—thou art now raised to the airy world of spirits, that by performing deeds of kindness for three hundred years, thou mayest acquire an immortal soul."

The little mermaid stretched out her transparent arms to the sun; and, for the first time in her life, tears moistened her eyes.

And now again all were awake and rejoicing in the ship. She saw the prince, with his pretty bride; they had missed her; they looked sorrowfully down on the foamy waters, as if they knew she had plunged into the sea. Unseen she kissed the bridegroom's forehead, smiled upon him, and then, with the rest of the children of air, soared high above the rosy cloud which was sailing so peacefully over the ship.

"After three hundred years we shall fly in the kingdom of Heaven!"

"We may arrive there even sooner," whispered one of her sisters. "We fly invisibly through the dwellings of men where there are children; and whenever we find a good child, who gives pleasure to his parents and deserves their love, the good God shortens our time of probation.

"No child is aware that we are flitting about his room; and that whenever joy draws from us a smile, a year is struck out of our three hundred. But when we see a rude, naughty child, we weep bitter tears of sorrow, and every tear we shed adds a day to our time of probation."

THE STORKS.

ON the roof of a house situated at the extremity of a small town, a stork had built his nest. There sat the mother-stork, with her four young ones, who all stretched out their little black bills, which had not yet become red. Not far off, upon the parapet, erect and proud, stood the father-stork; he had drawn one of his legs under him, being weary of standing on two. You might have fancied him carved in wood, he stood so motionless. "It looks so grand," thought he, "for my wife to have a sentinel to keep guard over her nest. People cannot know that I am her husband, they will certainly think that I am commanded to stand here—how well it looks!" and so he remained standing on one leg.

In the street below, a number of children were playing together. When they saw the storks, one of the liveliest amongst them began to sing as much as he could remember of some old rhymes about storks, in which he was soon joined by the others.

"Stork! stork! long-legged stork!
Into thy nest, I prithee, walk;
There sits thy mate,
With her four children so great.
The first we'll hang like a cat,
The second we'll burn,
The third on a spit we'll turn,
The fourth drown dead as a rat!"

"Only listen to what the boys are singing," said the little storks; "they say we shall be hanged and burned!"

"Never mind," said the mother, "don't listen to them; they will do you no harm."

But the boys went on singing, and pointed their fingers at the storks: only one little boy, called Peter, said it was a sin to mock and tease animals, and that he would have nothing to do with it.

The mother-stork again tried to comfort her little ones.

"Never mind," said she ; " see how calmly your father is standing there, and upon one leg only."

" But we are so frightened !" said the young ones, drawing their heads down into the nest.

The next day, when the children were again assembled to play together, and saw the storks, they again began their song.

"The first we'll hang like a cat,
The second we'll burn!"

" And are we really to be hanged and burned ?" asked the young storks.

" No indeed !" said the mother. " You shall learn to fly : I will teach you myself. Then we can fly over to the meadow, and pay a visit to the frogs. They will bow to us in the water, and say, ' Croak, croak ! ' and then we shall eat them ; will not that be nice ?"

" And what then ?" asked the little storks.

" Then all the storks in the country will gather together, and the autumn exercise will begin. It is of the greatest importance that you should fly well then ; for every one who does not, the general will stab to death with his bill. So you must pay great attention when we begin to drill you, and learn very quickly."

" Then we shall really be killed after all, as the boys said. Oh, listen ! they are singing it again."

" Attend to me, and not to them !" said the mother. " After the grand exercise, we shall fly to warm countries far, far away from here, over mountains and forests. We shall fly to Egypt, where are the three-cornered stone houses whose tops reach the clouds ; they are called pyramids, and are older than it is possible for storks to imagine. There is a river, too, which overflows its banks so as to make the whole country like a marsh, and we shall go into the marsh and eat frogs."

" Oh !" said the young ones.

" Yes, it is delightful ! One does nothing but eat all the day long. And while we are so comfortable, in this country not a single green leaf is left on the trees ; and

it is so cold that the clouds are frozen, and fall down upon the earth in little white pieces."

She meant snow, but she could not express herself more clearly.

"And will the naughty boys be frozen to pieces too?" asked the young storks.

"No, they will not be frozen to pieces; but they will be nearly as badly off as if they were: they will be obliged to crowd round the fire in their little dark rooms; while you, on the contrary, will be flying about in sunny lands, where there are beautiful flowers and warm sunshine."

Well, time passed away, and the young storks grew so tall that when they stood upright in the nest they could see the country around to a great distance. The father-stork used to bring them every day the nicest little frogs, as well as snails, and all the other stork tit-bits he could find. Oh! it was so droll to see him show them his tricks; he would lay his head upon his tail, make a rattling noise with his bill, and then tell them such charming stories all about the moors.

"Now you must learn to fly!" said the mother one day; and accordingly, all the four young storks were obliged to come out upon the parapet. Oh! how they trembled! And though they balanced themselves on their wings, they were very near falling.

"Only look at me," said the mother. "This is the way you must hold your heads; and in this manner place your feet—one, two! one, two! this will help you to get on." She flew a little way, and the young ones made an awkward spring after her—bounce! down they fell; for their bodies were heavy.

"I will not fly," said one of the young ones, as he crept back into the nest. "I do not want to go into the warm countries!"

"Do you want to be frozen to death during the winter? Shall the boys come and hang, burn, or roast you? Wait a little, I will call them!"

"Oh, no!" said the little stork; and again he began to

hop about on the roof like the others. By the third day they could fly pretty well, and so they thought they could also sit and take their ease in the air ; but bounce ! down they tumbled, and found themselves obliged to make use of their wings. The boys now came into the street, singing their favourite song.

“Stork ! stork ! long-legged stork !”

“Shall not we fly down and peck out their eyes ?” said the young ones.

“No, leave them alone !” said the mother. “Attend to me, that is of much more importance !—one, two, three, now to the right ! one, two, three, now to the left, round the chimney pot ! That was very well ; you managed your wings so neatly last time that I will let you come with me to-morrow to the marsh : several first-rate stork families will be there with their children. Let it be said that mine are the prettiest and best behaved of all ; and remember to stand very upright, and to throw out your chest : that looks well, and gives such an air of distinction !”

“But are we not to take revenge upon those rude boys ?” asked the young ones.

“Let them screech as much as they please ! You will fly among the clouds, you will go to the land of the pyramids, when they must shiver with cold, and have not a single green leaf to look at, nor a single sweet apple to eat !”

“Yes, we shall be revenged !” whispered they, one to another. And then they were drilled again.

Of all the boys in the town, the worst for singing nonsensical verses was always the same one who had begun teasing the storks, a little urchin not more than six years old. The young storks, indeed, fancied him a hundred years old, because he was bigger than either their father or their mother—and what should they know about the ages of children or grown-up human beings !

All their schemes of revenge were aimed at this little

boy; he had been the first to tease them, and continued to do so. The young storks were highly excited about it, and the older they grew, the less they were inclined to endure persecution. Their mother, in order to pacify them, at last promised that they should be revenged, but not until the last day of their stay in this place.

"We must first see how you behave yourselves at the grand exercise; if then you should fly badly, and the general should thrust his beak into your breast, the boys will, in some measure, be proved in the right. Let me see how well you will behave!"

"Yes, that you shall!" said the young ones. And now they really took great pains, practised every day, and at last flew so lightly and prettily that it was a pleasure to see them.

Well, now came the autumn. All the storks assembled, in order to fly together to warm countries for the winter. What a practising there was! Away they went over woods and fields, towns and villages, merely to see how well they could fly, for they had a long journey before them. The young storks distinguished themselves so honourably that they were pronounced "worthy of frogs and serpents." This was the highest character they could obtain; now they were allowed to eat frogs and serpents, and accordingly they did eat them.

"Now we will have our revenge!" said they.

"Very well!" said the mother; "I have been thinking what will be the best. I know where the pool is, in which all the little human children lie until the storks come and take them to their parents: the pretty little things sleep and dream so pleasantly as they will never dream again. All parents like to have a little child, and all children like to have a little brother or sister. We will fly to the pool and fetch one for each of the boys who has not sung that wicked song, nor made a jest of the storks; and the other naughty children shall have none."

"But he who first sang those naughty rhymes! that great ugly fellow! what shall we do to him?" cried the young storks.

"In the pool there lies a little child who has dreamed away his life; we will take it for him, and he will weep because he has only a little dead brother. But as to the good boy who said it was a sin to mock and tease animals, surely you have not forgotten him? We will bring him two little ones, a brother and a sister. And as this little boy's name is Peter, you too shall for the future be called 'Peter'!"

And it came to pass just as the mother said; and all the storks were called "Peter," and are still so called to this very day.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

IN China, as you well know, the Emperor is Chinese, and all around him are Chinese also. Now what I am about to tell happened many years ago, but on that very account it is the more important that you should hear the story now, before it is forgotten.

The Emperor's palace was the most magnificent palace in the world; it was made entirely of fine porcelain, exceedingly costly; but, at the same time, so brittle that it was dangerous even to touch it.

The choicest flowers were to be seen in the garden; and to the most splendid of all these, little silver bells were fastened, in order that their tinkling might prevent any one from passing by without noticing them. Yes! everything in the Emperor's garden was well arranged; and the garden extended so far that even the gardener did not know the end of it. Whoever walked beyond it, however, came to a beautiful wood, with very high trees; and beyond that, to the sea.

The wood went down to the sea, which was very deep

and blue: large ships could sail close under the branches; and among the branches dwelt a nightingale who sang so sweetly that even the poor fisherman, who had so much else to do, when he came out at night-time to cast his nets, would stand still and listen to her song. "Oh, how pretty that is!" he would say—but then he was obliged to mind his work, and forget the bird. Yet the following night, if again the nightingale sang, and the fisherman came out, again he would say, "Oh, how pretty that is!"

Travellers came from all parts of the world to the Emperor's city; and they admired the city, the palace, and the garden; but, if they heard the nightingale, they all said, "This is the best." And they talked about her after they went home, and learned men wrote books about the city, the palace, and the garden. Nor did they forget the nightingale: she was extolled above everything else; and poets wrote the most beautiful verses about the nightingale of the wood near the sea.

These books went round the world, and one of them at last reached the Emperor. He was sitting in his golden arm-chair; he read and read, and nodded his head every moment; for these splendid descriptions of the city, the palace, and the garden, pleased him greatly. "But the nightingale is the best of all," was written in the book.

"What in the world is this?" said the Emperor. "The nightingale! I do not know it at all! Can there be such a bird in my empire, in my garden even, without my having even heard of it? Truly, one may learn something from books."

So he called his Cavalier, or gentleman in waiting. Now this was so grand a person that no one of inferior rank might speak to him; and if one did venture to ask him a question, his only answer was "Psha!" which has no particular meaning.

"There is said to be a very remarkable bird here, called the nightingale," said the Emperor; "her song, they say,

is worth more than anything else in all my dominions. Why has no one ever told me of her?"

"I have never before heard her mentioned," said the Cavalier; "she has never been presented at court."

"I wish her to come and sing before me this evening," said the Emperor. "The whole world knows what I have, and I do not know it myself!"

"I have never before heard her mentioned," said the Cavalier; "but I will seek her, I will find her."

But where was she to be found? The Cavalier ran up one flight of steps, down another, through halls, and through passages; not one of all whom he met had ever heard of the nightingale. And the Cavalier returned to the Emperor, and said, "It must certainly be an invention of the man who wrote the book. Your Imperial Majesty must not believe all that is written in books; much in them is pure invention, and there is what is called the Black Art."

"But the book in which I have read it," said the Emperor, "was sent me by the high and mighty Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot be untrue. I wish to hear the nightingale; she must be here this evening, and if she do not come, after supper the whole court shall be flogged."

"Tsing-pe!" said the Cavalier; and again he ran upstairs, and downstairs, through halls, and through passages, and half the court ran with him; for not one would have relished the flogging. Many were the questions asked respecting the wonderful nightingale whom the whole world talked of, and about whom no one at court knew anything.

At last they met a poor little girl in the kitchen who said, "Oh yes! the nightingale! I know her very well. Oh, how she can sing! Every evening I carry the fragments left at table to my poor sick mother. She lives by the seashore; and when I am coming back, and stay to rest a little in the wood, I hear the nightingale sing; it

makes the tears come into my eyes ! It is just as if my mother kissed me."

"Little kitchen-maiden," said the Cavalier, "I will procure for you a sure appointment in the kitchen, together with permission to see His Majesty the Emperor dine, if you will conduct us to the nightingale, for she is expected at court this evening."

So they went together to the wood where the nightingale was accustomed to sing ; and half the court went with them. Whilst on their way, a cow began to low.

"Oh," said the court pages, "now we have her ! It is certainly an extraordinary voice for so small an animal ; surely I have heard it somewhere before."

"No, those are cows you hear lowing," said the little kitchen-maid ; "we are still far from the place."

The frogs were now croaking in the pond.

"That is famous !" said the chief court-preacher. "Now I hear her ; it sounds just like little church-bells."

"No, those are frogs," said the little kitchen-maid, "but now I think we shall soon hear her."

Then began the nightingale to sing.

"There she is !" said the little girl. "Listen ! listen ! There she sits ;" and she pointed to a little gray bird up in the branches.

"Is it possible ?" said the Cavalier. "I should not have thought it. How simple she looks ! she must certainly have changed colour at the sight of so many distinguished personages."

"Little nightingale !" called out the kitchen-maid, "our gracious Emperor wishes you to sing something to him."

"With the greatest pleasure," said the nightingale ; and she sang in such a manner that it was delightful to hear her.

"It sounds like glass bells," said the Cavalier. "And look at her little throat, how it moves ! It is singular that we should never have heard her before ; she will have great success at court."

"Shall I sing again to the Emperor?" asked the nightingale, for she thought the Emperor was among them.

"Most excellent nightingale!" said the Cavalier, "I have the honour to invite you to a court festival, which is to take place this evening, when His Imperial Majesty will be enchanted with your delightful song."

"My song would sound far better among the green trees," said the nightingale; however, she followed willingly when she heard that the Emperor wished it.

There was a regular decorating and polishing at the palace; the walls and the floors, which were all of porcelain, glittered with a thousand gold lamps; the loveliest flowers, with the merriest tinkling bells, were placed in the passages: there was a running to and fro, which made all the bells ring, so that one could not hear his own words.

In the midst of the grand hall where the Emperor sat a golden perch was erected, on which the nightingale was to sit. The whole court was present, and the little kitchen-maid received permission to stand behind the door, for she had now actually the rank and title of "Maid of the Kitchen." All were dressed out in their finest clothes; and all eyes were fixed upon the little gray bird, to whom the Emperor nodded as a signal for her to begin.

And the nightingale sang so sweetly that tears came into the Emperor's eyes, tears rolled down his cheeks; and the nightingale sang more sweetly still, and touched the hearts of all who heard her. And the Emperor was so merry that he said, "The nightingale should have his golden slippers, and wear them round her neck." But the nightingale thanked him, and said she was already sufficiently rewarded.

"I have seen tears in the Emperor's eyes, and that is the greatest reward I can have. The tears of an Emperor have a particular value. Heaven knows I am sufficiently rewarded." And then she sang again with her sweet, lovely voice.

"It is the most amiable coquetry ever known," said the ladies present; and they put water into their mouths, and tried to move their throats as she did, when they spoke: they thought to become nightingales also. Indeed, even the footmen and chamber-maids declared that they were quite contented; which was a great thing to say, for of all people they are the most difficult to satisfy.

Yes, indeed! the nightingale's success was complete. She was now to remain at court, to have her own cage; with leave to fly out twice in the day, and once in the night. Twelve attendants were allotted her, who were to hold a silken band, fastened round her foot; and they kept good hold: but there was no pleasure in excursions made in this manner.

All the city was talking of the wonderful bird; and when two persons met, one would say only "night," and the other "gale," and then they sighed, and understood each other perfectly. Indeed, eleven of the children of the citizens were named after the nightingale, but none of them had her tones in their throats.

One day a large parcel arrived for the Emperor, on which was written "Nightingale."

"Here we have another new book about our far-famed bird," said the Emperor. But it was not a book; it was a little piece of mechanism lying in a box—an artificial nightingale, which was intended to look like the living one, but which was covered all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. When this artificial bird had been wound up, it could sing one of the tunes that the real nightingale sang; and its tail, all glittering with silver and gold, went up and down all the time. A little band was fastened round its neck, on which was written, "The nightingale of the Emperor of China is poor compared with the nightingale of the Emperor of Japan."

"That is famous!" said every one; and he who had brought the bird obtained the title of "Chief Imperial

Nightingale Bringer." "Now they shall sing together; we will have a duet."

And so they must sing together; but it did not succeed, for the real nightingale sang in her own way, and the artificial bird produced its tones by wheels. "It is not his fault," said the artist; "he keeps exact time and quite according to method."

So the artificial bird must now sing alone: he was quite as successful as the real nightingale; and then he was so much prettier to look at; his plumage sparkled like jewels.

Three and thirty times he sang one and the same tune, and yet he was not weary; every one would willingly have heard him again. However, the Emperor now wished the real nightingale should sing something—but where was she? No one had remarked that she had flown out of the open window—flown away to her own green wood.

"What is the meaning of this?" said the Emperor; and all the courtiers abused the nightingale, and called her a most ungrateful creature. "We have the best bird at all events," said they; and for the four and thirtieth time they heard the same tune, but still they did not quite know it, because it was so difficult. The artist praised the bird very highly; indeed, he declared it was superior to the real nightingale, not only in its exterior, all sparkling with diamonds, but also internally.

"For see, my noble lords, His Imperial Majesty especially, with the real nightingale one could never reckon on what was coming: but everything is settled with the artificial bird; he will sing in this one way, and no other. This can be proved; he can be taken to pieces, and the works can be shown—where the wheels lie, how they move, and how one follows from another."

"That is just what I think," said everybody; and the artist received permission to show the bird to the people on the following Sunday. "They too should hear him sing," the Emperor said.

So they heard him, and were as well pleased as if they had all been drinking tea—for it is tea that makes Chinese merry; and they all said, "Oh!" and raised their forefingers, and nodded their heads. But the fisherman, who had heard the real nightingale, said, "It sounds very pretty, almost like the real bird; but yet there is something wanting, I do not know what."

The real nightingale was, however, banished from the empire.

The artificial bird had his place on a silken cushion, close to the Emperor's bed; all the presents he received, gold and precious stones, lay around him. He had obtained the rank and title of "High Imperial Dessert Singer," and therefore his place was number one on the left side; for the Emperor thought that the side where the heart was situated must be the most honourable—and the heart is situated on the left side of an Emperor, as well as with other folks.

And the artist wrote five and twenty volumes about the artificial bird, with the longest and most difficult words that are to be found in the Chinese language. So, of course, all said they had read and understood them, otherwise they would have been stupid, and perhaps would have been flogged.

Thus it went on for a year. The Emperor, the court, and all the Chinese knew every note of the artificial bird's song by heart; but that was the very reason they enjoyed it so much, they could now sing with him. The little boys in the street sang "zizizi, cluck, cluck, cluck!" and the Emperor himself sang too—yes, indeed, that was charming!

But one evening, when the bird was in full voice, and the Emperor lay in bed—and listened, there was suddenly a noise—"bang"—inside the bird, then something sprang—"fur-r-r-r"; all the wheels were running about, and the music stopped.

The Emperor jumped quickly out of bed, and had his chief physician called; but of what use could he be?

Then a clockmaker was sent for, and, at last, after a great deal of discussion and consultation, the bird was in some measure put to rights again. But the clockmaker said he must be spared much singing, for the pegs were almost worn out, and it was impossible to renew them, at least so that the music should be correct.

There was great lamentation, for now the artificial bird was allowed to sing only once a year, and even then there were difficulties. However, the artist made a short speech full of his long words, and said the bird was as good as ever : so then, of course, it was as good as ever.

When five years had passed away, a great trouble befell the whole empire, for in their hearts the people thought highly of their Emperor ; and now he was ill, and it was reported that he could not live. A new Emperor had already been chosen, and the people stood in the street, outside the palace, and asked the Cavalier how the Emperor was ?

“ Psha ! ” said he, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his magnificent bed ; all the court believed him to be already dead, and every one had hastened away to greet the new Emperor ; the men ran out for a little gossip on the subject, and the maids were having a grand coffee-party.

The floors of all the rooms and passages were covered with cloth, in order that not a step should be heard—it was everywhere so still ! so still ! But the Emperor was not yet dead ; stiff and pale he lay in his splendid bed, with the long velvet curtains, and heavy gold tassels. A window was opened above, and the moon shone down on the Emperor and the artificial bird.

The poor Emperor could scarcely breathe ; it appeared to him as if something was sitting on his chest ; he opened his eyes and saw that it was Death, who had put on the Emperor's crown, and with one hand held the golden scimitar, with the other the splendid imperial banner. From under the folds of the thick velvet

hangings the strangest-looking heads were seen peering forth ; some with an expression absolutely hideous, and others with an extremely gentle and lovely aspect. They were the bad and good deeds of the Emperor, which were now all fixing their eyes upon him, whilst Death sat on his heart.

"Dost thou know this?" they whispered one after another. "Dost thou remember that?" And they began reproaching him in such a manner that the sweat broke out upon his forehead.

"I have never known anything like it," said the Emperor. "Music, music, the great Chinese drum!" cried he. "Let me not hear what they are saying."

They went on, however ; and Death, quite in the Chinese fashion, nodded his head to every word.

"Music, music!" cried the Emperor. "Thou dear little artificial bird! sing, I pray thee, sing! I have given thee gold and precious stones; I have even hung my golden slippers round thy neck. Sing, I pray thee, sing!"

But the bird was silent ; there was no one there to wind him up, and he could not sing without this. Death continued to stare at the Emperor with his great hollow eyes, and everywhere it was still, fearfully still!

All at once the sweetest song was heard from the window ; it was the little living nightingale, who was sitting on a branch outside. She had heard of her Emperor's severe illness, and was come to sing to him of comfort and hope. As she sang, the spectral forms became paler and paler, the blood flowed more and more quickly through the Emperor's feeble members, and even Death listened, and said, "Go on, little nightingale, go on."

"Wilt thou give me the splendid gold scimitar? Wilt thou give me the gay banner, and the Emperor's crown?"

And Death gave up all these treasures for a song ; and the nightingale sang on. She sang of the quiet churchyard, where white roses blossom, where the lilac sends

forth its fragrance, and the fresh grass is bedewed with the tears of the sorrowing friends of the departed. Then Death was seized with a longing after his garden, and like a cold white shadow, flew out at the window.

"Thanks, thanks," said the Emperor, "thou heavenly little bird, I know thee well. I have banished thee from my realm, and thou hast sung away those evil faces from my bed, and death from my heart; how shall I reward thee?"

"Thou hast already rewarded me," said the nightingale; "I have seen tears in thine eyes, as when I sang to thee for the first time. Those I shall never forget; they are jewels which do so much good to a minstrel's heart! But sleep now, and wake fresh and healthy; I will sing thee to sleep."

And she sang, and the Emperor fell into a sweet sleep. Oh, how soft and kindly was that sleep!

The sun shone in at the window when he awoke, strong and healthy. Not one of his servants had returned, for they all believed him dead; but the nightingale still sat and sang.

"Thou shalt always stay with me," said the Emperor; "thou shalt sing only when it pleases thee; and the artificial bird I will break into a thousand pieces."

"Do not so," said the nightingale; "truly he has done what he could; take care of him. I cannot stay in the palace; but let me come when I like: I will sit on the branches close to the window, in the evening, and sing to thee, that thou mayest become happy and thoughtful.

"I will sing to thee of the joyful and the sorrowing; I will sing to thee of all that is good or bad, which is concealed from thee. The little minstrel flies afar to the fisherman's hut, to the peasant's cottage, to all who are far distant from thee and thy court. I love thy heart more than thy crown, and yet the crown has an odour of something holy about it. I will come; I will sing: but thou must promise me one thing."

"Everything," said the Emperor. And now he stood

in his imperial splendour, which he had put on himself, and held the scimitar, so heavy with gold, to his heart.

"One thing I beg of thee: let no one know that thou hast a little bird, who tells thee everything; then all will go on well." And the nightingale flew away.

The attendants came in to look at their dead Emperor, and lo! as there they stood, the Emperor said, "Good-morning!"

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.

"My flowers are quite faded," said little Ida. "Only yesterday evening they were so pretty, and now they are all drooping! What can be the reason of it?" asked she of the student who was sitting on the sofa, and who was a great favourite with her, because he used to tell her stories, and cut out all sorts of pretty things for her in paper—such as hearts with little ladies dancing in them, flowers, high castles with open doors, etc. "Why do these flowers look so deplorable?" asked she again, showing him a bouquet of faded flowers.

"Do you not know?" replied the student. "Your flowers went to a ball last night, and are tired; that is why they all hang their heads."

"Surely flowers cannot dance!" exclaimed little Ida.

"Of course they can dance! When it is dark, and we have all gone to bed, they jump about as merrily as possible. They have a ball almost every night."

"May children go to the ball too?" asked Ida.

"Yes," said the student; "daisies and lilies of the valley."

"And where do the prettiest flowers dance?"

"Have you never been in the large garden in front of the King's beautiful summer palace—the garden so full of flowers? Surely you remember the swans that come swimming up to you, when you throw them crumbs of

bread? There you may imagine they have splendid balls."

"I was there yesterday with my mother," said Ida; "but there were no leaves on the trees, neither did I see a single flower. What could have become of them? There were so many in the summer-time!"

"They are now at the palace," answered the student. "As soon as the King leaves his summer residence, and returns with all his court to the town, the flowers likewise hasten out of the garden and into the palace, where they enjoy themselves famously. Oh, if you could but see them!"

"The two loveliest roses sit on the throne, and act King and Queen. The red cocks-combs then arrange themselves in rows before them, bowing very low; they are the gentlemen of the bedchamber. After that the prettiest among the flowers come in, and open the ball. The blue violets represent midshipmen, and begin dancing with the hyacinths and crocuses, who take the part of young ladies. The tulips and the tall orange-lilies are old dowagers, whose business it is to see that everything goes on with perfect propriety."

"But," asked the astonished little Ida, "may the flowers give their ball in the King's palace?"

"No one knows anything about it," replied the student. "Perhaps once during the night the old chamberlain may come in, with his great bunch of keys, to see that all is right; but as soon as the flowers hear the clanking of the keys they are quite still, and hide themselves behind the long silk window curtains. 'I smell flowers here,' says the old chamberlain; but he is not able to find them."

"That is very funny," said Ida, clapping her little hands; "but could not I see the flowers?"

"To be sure you can see them!" returned the student. "You have only to peep in at the window next time you go to the palace. I did so to-day, and saw a long yellow lily lying on the sofa. That was a court lady."

"Can the flowers in the Botanic Gardens go there too? Can they go so far?" asked Ida.

"Certainly, for flowers can fly if they wish. The pretty red and yellow butterflies, which look so much like flowers, are, in fact, nothing else. They jump from their stalks, move their petals, as if they were little wings, and fly about. As a reward for always behaving themselves well, they are allowed, instead of sitting quietly on their stalks, to flutter hither and thither all day long, till wings actually grow out of their petals. You have often seen it yourself.

"For the rest, it may be that the flowers in the Botanic Gardens have not heard what merry-making goes on every night at the palace. But I assure you, if, next time you go into the garden, you whisper to one of the flowers that a ball is to be given at night at Friedrichsburg, the news will be repeated from flower to flower, and there they will all fly to a certainty. Then, should the professor come into the garden, and find all his flowers gone, he will not be able to imagine what is become of them."

"Indeed!" said Ida, rather vexed at the student's strange words. "And, pray, how can the flowers repeat to each other what I say to them? I am sure that flowers cannot speak."

"No, they cannot speak; you are right there," returned the student; "but they make themselves understood by means of pantomime. Have you never seen them move to and fro at the least breath of air? They can understand each other this way as well as we can by talking."

"And does the professor understand their pantomime?" asked Ida.

"Oh, certainly! One morning he came into the garden, and observed that a tall nettle was conversing in pantomime with a pretty red carnation. 'Thou art so beautiful,' said he to the carnation; 'and I love thee so much!' But the professor could not allow such

things, so he gave a rap at the nettle's leaves, which are his fingers, and in doing so he stung himself, and since then has never dared to touch a nettle."

"Ah ha!" laughed little Ida; "that was very foolish."

"What do you mean by this?" here interrupted the tedious counsellor, who had come on a visit; "putting such things into children's heads."

He could not endure the student, and always used to scold when he saw him cutting out pasteboard figures—as, for instance, a man on the gallows holding a heart in his hand, which was meant for a heart-stealer; or an old witch, riding on a broomstick, and carrying her husband on the tip of her nose. He used always to say then as now: "What do you mean by putting such things into children's heads? It is all nonsensical rubbish!"

However, little Ida thought what the student told her about the flowers was very strange, and she could not help thinking of it. She was now sure that her flowers hung their heads because they were tired with dancing so much the night before; so she took them to the pretty little table, where her playthings were arranged. Her doll lay sleeping in the cradle, but Ida said to her, "You must get up, Sophy, and be content to sleep to-night in the table-drawer, for the poor flowers are ill, and must sleep in your bed; perhaps they will be well again by to-morrow." She then took the doll out of the bed; but the good lady looked vexed at having to give up her cradle to the flowers.

Ida then laid the faded flowers in her doll's bed, drew the covering over them, and told them to lie quite still, whilst she made some tea for them to drink, in order that they might be well again the next day. And she drew the curtains round the bed, so that the sun might not dazzle their eyes.

All the evening she thought of nothing but the student's words; and just before she went to bed, she ran up to

the window, where her mother's tulips and hyacinths stood behind the blinds, and whispered to them, "I know very well that you are going to a ball to-night." But the flowers moved not a leaf, and seemed not to have heard her.

After she was in bed, she thought for a long time how delightful it must be to see the flowers dancing in the palace, and said to herself, "I wonder whether my flowers have been there?" but before she could settle the point, she fell asleep.

During the night she awoke; she had been dreaming of the student and the flowers, and of the counsellor who told her that they were making game of her. All was still in the room; the night lamp was burning on the table; and her father and mother were both asleep.

"I wonder whether my flowers are still lying in Sophy's bed?" said she. "I should very much like to know." She raised herself a little, looked towards the door, which stood half open; she saw that the flowers and all her playthings were just as she had left them. She listened, and it seemed to her as if some one must be playing on the piano; but the tones were lower and sweeter than she had ever heard before. "Now my flowers must certainly be dancing," said she. "Oh, how I should like to see them!" but she dared not get up for fear of waking her father and mother. "If they would only come in here!" Still the flowers did not come; and the piano sounded so sweetly. At last she could restrain herself no longer, she must see the dancing; so she crept lightly out of bed, and stole towards the door of the room. Oh, what wonderful things she saw then!

The night lamp was burning no longer. However, it was quite light in the room, for the moon shone brightly through the windows on the floor. All the hyacinths and tulips stood there in two rows, whilst their empty pots might still be seen in front of the windows; they performed figures, and took hold of each other by the leaves. At the piano sat a large yellow lily, which Ida fancied she must





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"She then saw her sisters rise out of the waters."

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have seen before, for she remembered the student's saying that this flower was exceedingly like Miss Laura, and how every one had laughed at his remark. Now she herself agreed that the lily did resemble this young lady, for she had exactly her way of playing, bowing her long yellow face now to one side, now to the other, and nodding her head to mark the time.

A tall blue crocus now stepped forward, sprang upon the table, on which lay Ida's playthings, went straight up to the bed, and drew back the curtains. There lay the sick flowers ; but they arose immediately, and greeted the other flowers, who invited them to dance with them. The sick flowers got up, appeared quite well again, and danced as merrily as the rest.

Suddenly a heavy noise as of something falling from the table was heard. Ida cast a glance that way, and saw that it was the rod which she had found on her bed on the morning of Shrove Tuesday, and which was desirous of ranking itself among the flowers. It was certainly a very pretty rod, for a wax doll was fixed on the top, wearing a hat, as broad-brimmed as the counsellor's, with a blue and red ribbon tied round it. She hopped upon her three red stilts in the middle of the flowers, and stamped the floor merrily with her feet : she was dancing the Mazurka, which the flowers could not dance, they were so light-footed.

All at once the wax doll on the rod swelled out to a giant, tall and broad, and exclaimed in a loud voice, "What do you mean by putting such things into children's heads? It is all nonsensical rubbish !"

And now the doll looked as much like the counsellor in his broad-brimmed hat, as one drop of water resembles another ; her countenance looked as yellow and peevish as his ; the paper flowers on the rod, however, pinched her thin legs, and she shrunk up to her original size.

The little Ida thought this scene so droll that she could not help laughing ; the company, however, did not notice it, for the rod continued to stamp about, till at last the

doll-counsellor was obliged to dance too, whether she would or no, and make herself now thin, now thick, now tall, now short, till at last the flowers interceded for her, and the rod then left her in peace.

A loud knocking was now heard from the drawer in which lay Ida's doll. It was Sophy who made the noise. She put her head out of the drawer and asked in great astonishment, "Is there a ball here? Why has no one told me of it?"

"Will you dance with me?" asked the nut-crackers.

"Certainly; you are a very fit person to dance with me!" said Sophy, turning her back to him. She then sat down on the table, expecting that one of the flowers would come and ask her to dance; but no one came. She coughed—"Hem! hem!" Still no one came. Meantime the nut-crackers danced by himself, and his steps were not at all badly made.

As no flowers came forward to ask Sophy to dance, all at once she let herself fall down upon the floor, which excited a general commotion, so that all the flowers ran up to ask her whether she had hurt herself; but she had received no injury. The flowers, however, were all very polite, especially Ida's flowers, who took the opportunity of thanking her for the comfortable bed in which they had slept so quietly, and then seized her hands to dance with her, whilst all the other flowers stood in a circle round them. Sophy was now quite happy, and begged Ida's flowers to make use of her bed again after the ball, as she did not at all mind sleeping one night in the table-drawer.

But the flowers said, "We owe you many thanks for your kindness, but we shall not live long enough to need it, as we shall be dead by to-morrow. But ask the little Ida to bury us in the garden near her canary-bird; then we shall grow again next summer, and be even more beautiful than we have been this year."

"No, you must not die!" replied Sophy warmly, as she kissed the flowers. Just then the door was suddenly opened, and a number of flowers danced into the room.

Ida could not imagine where these flowers came from, unless from the King's garden. First of all, entered two beautiful roses wearing golden crowns; then followed stocks and pinks, bowing to the company on all sides.

They had also a band of music with them; great poppies and peonies blew upon the shells of peas till they were quite red in the face, whilst blue and white campanulas rang a merry peal of bells. These were followed by an immense number of different flowers all dancing—violets, daisies, lilies of the valley, narcissuses, and others, who all moved so gracefully that it was delightful to see them.

At last these happy flowers wished one another "good-night"; so little Ida once more crept into bed, to dream of all the beautiful things she had seen.

The next morning, as soon as she was up and dressed, she went to her little table to see if her flowers were there. She drew aside the bed-curtains—yes! there lay the flowers, but they were to-day much more faded than yesterday; Sophy, too, was lying in the drawer, but she looked uncommonly sleepy.

"Can you not remember what you have to say to me?" asked little Ida of her; but Sophy made a most stupid face, and answered not a syllable. "You are not at all good!" said she, "and yet all the flowers let you dance with them." She then chose out from her playthings a little pasteboard box with birds painted on it, and therein she placed the faded flowers. "That shall be your coffin," said she; "and when my Norwegian cousins come to see me, they shall go with me to bury you in the garden, so that next summer you may bloom again, and be still more beautiful than you have been this year."

The two Norwegian cousins of whom she spoke were two lively boys, called Jonas and Esben. Their father had given them two new cross-bows, which they brought with them to show to Ida. She then told them of the poor flowers that were dead, and were to be buried in

the garden. The two boys walked in front with their bows slung across their shoulders, and little Ida followed, carrying the dead flowers in their pretty coffin. A grave was dug for them in the garden. Ida kissed the flowers once more, then laid the box down in the hollow, and Jonas and Esben shot arrows over the grave with their cross-bows, for they had neither guns nor cannon.

THE SWINEHERD.

THERE was once a poor Prince, who had a kingdom ; it was very small, but still quite large enough to marry upon ; and he wished to marry.

It was certainly rather cool of him to say to the Emperor's daughter, "Will you have me?" But so he did ; for his name was renowned far and wide ; and there were a hundred princesses who would have answered "Yes !" and "Thank you kindly." We shall see what this Princess said.

Listen !

It happened that where the Prince's father lay buried, there grew a rose-tree—a most beautiful rose-tree, which blossomed only once in every five years, and even then bore only one flower. But that *was* a rose ! It smelt so sweet that all cares and sorrows were forgotten by him who inhaled its fragrance.

And furthermore, the Prince had a nightingale who could sing in such a manner that it seemed as if all sweet melodies dwelt in her little throat. So the Princess was to have the rose and the nightingale ; and they were accordingly put into large silver caskets, and sent to her.

The Emperor had them brought into a large hall, where the Princess was playing at "Visiting," with the ladies of the court ; and when she saw the caskets with the presents, she clapped her hands for joy.

"Ah, if it were but a little pussy-cat!" said she; but the rose-tree, with its beautiful rose, came to view.

"Oh, how prettily it is made!" said all the court-ladies.

"It is more than pretty," said the Emperor; "it is charming!"

But the Princess touched it, and was almost ready to cry.

"Fie, papa!" said she, "it is not made at all, it is natural!"

"Let us see what is in the other casket, before we get into a bad humour," said the Emperor. So the nightingale came forth, and sang so delightfully that at first no one could say anything ill-humoured of her.

"*Superbe! charmant!*" exclaimed the ladies; for they all used to chatter French, each one worse than her neighbour.

"How much the bird reminds me of the musical box that belonged to our blessed Empress," said an old knight. "Oh, yes! these are the same tones; this is the same style of execution."

"Yes! yes!" said the Emperor, and he wept like a child at the remembrance.

"I will still hope that it is not a real bird," said the Princess.

"Yes, it is a real bird," said those who had brought it.

"Well, then, let the bird fly," said the Princess; and she positively refused to see the Prince.

However, he was not to be discouraged; he daubed his face over brown and black; pulled his cap over his ears, and knocked at the door.

"Good-day to my lord the Emperor!" said he. "Can I have employment at the palace?"

"Why, yes," said the Emperor; "I want some one to take care of the pigs, for we have a great many of them."

So the Prince was appointed "Imperial Swineherd." He had a dirty little room close by the pig-sty, and there

he sat the whole day and worked. By the evening, he had made a pretty little kitchen-pot; little bells were hung all round it; and when the pot was boiling, these bells tinkled in the most charming manner, and played the old melody—

“Ach! du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg, weg, weg!”

But what was still more curious, whoever held his finger in the smoke of the kitchen-pot immediately smelt all the dishes that were cooking on every hearth in the city—and this, you see, was something quite different from the rose.

Now the Princess happened to walk that way; and when she heard the tune she stood quite still, and seemed pleased; for she could play “Lieber Augustin.” It was the only piece she knew; and she played it with one finger.

“Why, there is my piece,” said the Princess; “that swineherd must certainly have been well educated! Go in and ask him the price of the instrument.”

So one of the court-ladies had to run in; however, she drew on wooden slippers first.

“What will you take for the kitchen-pot?” said the lady.

“I will have ten kisses from the Princess,” said the swineherd.

“Yes, indeed!” said the lady.

“I cannot sell it for less,” rejoined the swineherd.

“He is an impudent fellow!” said the Princess, and she walked on; but when she had gone a little way, the bells tinkled so prettily—

“Ach! du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg, weg, weg!”

“Stay,” said the Princess. “Ask him if he will have ten kisses from the ladies of my court.”

* “Ah! dear Augustine!
All is gone, gone, gone!”

"No, thank you!" said the swineherd; "ten kisses from the Princess, or I keep the kitchen-pot myself."

"That must not be either!" said the Princess; "but do you all stand before me, that no one may see us."

And the court-ladies placed themselves in front of her, and spread out their dresses. The swineherd got ten kisses, and the Princess—the kitchen-pot.

That was delightful! The pot was boiling the whole evening, and the whole of the following day. They knew perfectly well what was cooking at every fire throughout the city, from the chamberlain's to the cobbler's: the court-ladies danced, and clapped their hands.

"We know who has soup, and who has pancakes for dinner to-day; who has cutlets, and who has eggs. How interesting!"

"Yes, but keep my secret, for I am an Emperor's daughter."

The swineherd—that is to say, the Prince, for no one knew that he was other than an ill-favoured swineherd—did not let a day pass without working at something. He at last constructed a rattle, which, when it was swung round, played all the waltzes and jig tunes which have ever been heard since the creation of the world.

"Ah, that is *superbe!*" said the Princess when she passed by. "I have never heard prettier compositions! Go in and ask him the price of the instrument; but mind, he shall have no more kisses!"

"He will have a hundred kisses from the Princess!" said the lady who had been to ask.

"I think he is not in his right senses!" said the Princess, and walked on; but when she had gone a little way, she stopped again. "One must encourage art," said she. "I am the Emperor's daughter. Tell him he shall, as on yesterday, have ten kisses from me, and may take the rest from the ladies of the court."

"Oh! but we should not like that at all!" said they.

"What are you muttering?" asked the Princess. "If I can kiss him, surely you can! Remember that you

owe everything to me." So the ladies were obliged to go to him again.

"A hundred kisses from the Princess!" said he, "or else let every one keep his own."

"Stand round!" said she; and all the ladies stood round her whilst the kissing was going on.

"What can be the reason for such a crowd close by the pig-sty?" said the Emperor, who happened just then to step out on the balcony: he rubbed his eyes and put on his spectacles. "They are the ladies of the court; I must go down and see what they are about!" So he pulled up his slippers at the heel, for he had trodden them down.

As soon as he had got into the courtyard, he moved very softly; and the ladies were so much engrossed with counting the kisses, that all might go on fairly, that they did not perceive the Emperor. He rose on his tip-toes.

"What is all this?" said he, when he saw what was going on; and he boxed the Princess's ears with his slipper, just as the swineherd was taking the eighty-sixth kiss.

"March out!" said the Emperor, for he was very angry; and both Princess and swineherd were thrust out of the city.

The Princess now stood and wept; the swineherd scolded; and the rain poured down.

"Alas! unhappy creature that I am," said the Princess. "If I had but married the handsome young Prince! Ah, how unfortunate I am!"

And the swineherd went behind a tree, washed the black and brown colour from his face, threw off his dirty clothes, and stepped forth in his princely robes; he looked so noble that the Princess could not help bowing before him.

"I am come to despise thee," said he. "Thou would'st not have an honourable prince! thou could'st not prize the rose and the nightingale, but thou wast ready to kiss the

swineherd for the sake of a trumpery plaything. Thou art rightly served."

He then went back to his own little kingdom, and shut the door of his palace in her face. Now she might well sing—

"Ach! du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg, weg, weg!"

THE DUSTMAN.

THERE is no one in the whole world who knows so many stories as the Dustman. Oh! his are delightful stories.

In the evening, when children are sitting quietly at table, or on their little stools, he takes off his shoes, comes softly upstairs, opens the door very gently, and all on a sudden throws dust into the children's eyes. He then glides behind them, and breathes lightly, very lightly, upon their necks, and their heads become, oh, so heavy! But it does them no harm, for the Dustman means it kindly; he only wants the children to be quiet, and they are most quiet when they are in bed. They must be quiet, in order that he may tell them his stories.

When the children are asleep, the Dustman sits down upon the bed; he is gaily dressed, and his coat is of silk; but of what colour it is impossible to say, for it seems now green, now red, now blue, according to the light. Under each arm he holds an umbrella; one, which has pictures painted on it, he holds over good children: it makes them have the most delightful dreams all night long. The other, which has nothing on it, he holds over naughty children, so that they sleep heavily, and awake in the morning without having dreamed at all.

Now let us hear what stories the Dustman told to a little boy, of the name of Hialmar, to whom he came every evening for a whole week through. There are seven stories altogether, for the week has seven days.

MONDAY.

"Listen to me," said the Dustman, as soon as he had got Hialmar into bed. "Now I will decorate your room;" and all at once, as he was speaking, the flowers in the flower-pots grew up into large trees, whose long branches reached to the ceiling, and along the walls, so that the room looked like a beautiful arbour. All these branches were full of flowers, and every flower was more beautiful even than the rose, and had such a pleasant smell.

Moreover, could you have tasted them, you would have found them sweeter than preserves. And fruit, which shone like gold, hung from the trees; also dumplings full of currants: never was the like seen before. But, at the same time, a loud wailing was heard in the table-drawer, where Hialmar's school-books were kept.

"What is the matter?" said the Dustman, going up to the table, and taking out the drawer. There lay the slate, on which the figures were pressing and squeezing together, because a wrong figure had got into the sum. The pencil hopped and skipped about like a little dog; he wanted to help the sum, but he could not.

And a little farther off lay Hialmar's copy-book. A complaining and moaning came thence also, which was quite unpleasant to hear: at the beginning of every line on each page, there stood a large letter with a little letter by its side. This was the copy; and after them stood other letters intended to look like the copy. Hialmar had written these; but they seemed to have fallen over the lines, upon which they ought to have stood.

"Look, this is the way you must hold yourselves," said the copy; "look, slanting just so, and turning round with a jerk."

"Oh! we would do so willingly," said Hialmar's letters; "but we cannot, we are so badly made."

"Then you shall have some of the children's powders," said the Dustman.

"Oh no!" cried they, and stood so straight that it was a pleasure to see them.

"Well, I cannot tell you any more stories now," said the Dustman; "I must drill these letters—right, left, right, left!" So he drilled the letters till they looked as straight and perfect as only the letters in a copy can be. However, after the Dustman had gone away, and when Hialmar looked at them the next morning, they were as miserable and badly formed as before.

TUESDAY.

As soon as Hialmar was in bed, the Dustman touched, with his little magic wand, all the pieces of furniture in the room; whereupon they all began to talk. They all talked about themselves, except the spittoon, who stood quite still, and was much vexed at their being so vain—all talking about themselves, without ever thinking of him who stood so modestly in the corner, and suffered himself to be spat upon.

Over the wardrobe there hung a large picture in a gilt frame; it was a landscape. There you might see tall trees, flowers blossoming in the grass, and a river that wound round the wood, passing many a grand old castle on its way to the sea.

The Dustman touched the picture with his magic wand, and immediately the birds began to sing, the boughs of the trees waved to and fro, and the clouds actually flew; one could see their shadows move over the landscape.

The Dustman then lifted little Hialmar up to the frame, and Hialmar put his legs into the picture. There he stood amid the tall grass. He ran to the water's edge, and sat down in a little boat, painted red and white, with sails glittering like silver; six swans, with golden wreaths round their necks, and bright blue stars upon their heads, drew the boat along, near a green wood, where the trees were telling stories about robbers and witches, and the flowers were talking of the pretty little fairies, and what the butterflies had said to them.

Beautiful fishes, with scales like gold and silver, swam behind the boat, every now and then leaping up, so that the water was splashed over Hialmar's head ; birds red and blue, great and small, flew after him in two long rows ; the gnats danced, and the cockchafers said " Boom, boom ! " They all wished to accompany Hialmar, and every one of them had a story to tell.

A pleasant voyage was that ! The woods were now thick and gloomy, now like beautiful gardens beaming with flowers and sunshine. Large palaces built of glass or marble rose from among the trees ; young princesses stood in the balconies—they were all little girls whom Hialmar knew well, and with whom he had often played. They stretched out their hands to him, each holding a pretty little image made of sugar, such as are seen in confectioners' shops. Hialmar seized the end of one of these little images as he sailed by, and a princess kept hold of the other ; so each got half—the princess the smaller, Hialmar the larger.

At every castle little princes were keeping guard ; they shouldered their golden scimitars, and showered down raisins and tin soldiers—these were true princes ! Hialmar sailed sometimes through woods, sometimes through large halls, or the middle of a town. Among others he passed through the town where his nurse lived, she who had brought him up from his infancy, and who loved him so much. She nodded and beckoned to him as he passed by, and sang the pretty verses she had herself composed and sent to him.

" How many, many hours I think on thee,
My own dear Hialmar, still my pride and joy !
How have I hung delighted over thee,
Kissing thy rosy cheeks, my darling boy !

Thy first low accents it was mine to hear,
To-day my farewell words to thee shall fly.
Oh ! may the Lord thy shield be ever near,
And fit thee for a mansion in the sky ! "

And all the birds sang with her, the flowers danced

upon their stalks, and the old trees nodded their heads whilst the Dustman told stories to them also.

WEDNESDAY.

Oh, how the rain was pouring down ! Hialmar could hear it even in his sleep ; and when the Dustman opened the window the water came in upon the ledge ; there was quite a lake in front of the house, and on it a splendid ship.

“ Will you sail with me, little Hialmar ? ” said the Dustman. “ If you will, you shall visit foreign lands to-night, and be here again by the morning. ”

And now Hialmar, dressed in his Sunday clothes, was in the ship ; the weather immediately cleared up, and they floated down the street, cruised round the church, and were soon sailing upon the wide sea. They quickly lost sight of land, and could see only a number of storks, who had all come from Hialmar’s country, and were going to a warmer one.

The storks were flying one after another, and were already very far from land, when one of them was so weary that his wings could scarcely bear him up any longer ; he was last in the train, and was soon far behind the others. He sank lower and lower, with his wings outspread ; he still endeavoured to move them, but it was all in vain ; his wings touched the ship’s cordage ; he slid down the sail, and—bounce ! there he stood on the deck.

So the cabin-boy put him into the place where the hens, ducks, and turkeys were kept ; the poor stork stood amongst them quite confounded.

“ Only look, what a foolish fellow ! ” said all the hens. And the turkey-cock made himself as big as he could, and asked him who he was ; and the ducks waddled backwards and pushed each other—“ Quack, quack ! ”

The stork then told them about his warm Africa, about the pyramids, and about the ostrich, who races through the desert like a wild horse. But the ducks did not

understand him, and again pushed each other, saying, "Do we not all agree in thinking him very stupid?"

"Yes, indeed he is stupid!" said the turkey-cock, and began to gobble.

So the stork was silent, and thought of his Africa. "You have really very pretty slender legs!" said the turkey-cock. "What did they cost you per yard?"

"Quack, quack, quack," all the ducks began to titter; but the stork seemed not to have heard the question.

"You might just as well have laughed with them," said the turkey-cock to him, "for it was a capital joke! But perhaps it was not high enough for you? Ah! ah! he has very grand ideas; let us go on amusing ourselves." And then he gobbled, the hens cackled, and the ducks quacked; they made a horrid noise with their amusements.

But Hialmar went to the hen-house, opened the door and called the stork, who immediately jumped on deck. He had now rested himself sufficiently; and bowed his head to Hialmar, as if to thank him. He then spread his wings and flew away—whilst the hens cackled, the ducks quacked, and the turkey-cock turned red as fire.

"To-morrow we will have you all made into soup!" said Hialmar; then he awoke, and found himself in his own little bed. A strange journey had the Dustman taken him that night!

THURSDAY.

"I'll tell you what!" said the Dustman—"do not be afraid, and you shall see a little mouse!" and he held out his hand, with the pretty little animal in it. "She is come to invite you to a wedding: there are two little mice here, who intend, this very night, to enter into matrimony. They live under the floor of the dining-room; theirs must be such a pretty house."

"But how can I get through the little hole?" asked Hialmar.

"Let me take care of that," said the Dustman. "I will make you very little!" And he touched Hialmar

with his magic wand, and he became smaller and smaller, till at last he was no larger than his own fingers. "Now you can borrow the tin soldiers' clothes; I think they will just fit you; and it looks so grand to wear uniform when you are in company."

"Ah, yes!" said Hialmar, and in another moment he was dressed like the prettiest little tin soldier.

"Will you have the goodness to sit down in your mother's thimble?" said the little mouse. "In that case, I shall feel honoured by drawing you along."

"What! will you really take so much trouble?" said Hialmar; and away they went to the mouse's wedding.

They first came to a long passage under the floor, which was high enough for the thimble to be drawn along through it, and was lighted up with toadstools throughout.

"Is there not a pleasant smell here?" said the mouse who was drawing the thimble. "The whole passage is covered with rind of bacon; there is nothing more delightful!"

They now entered the bridal apartment: the lady mice stood on the right-hand side, whispering together, seemingly very merry; on the left side stood the gentlemen mice, who were all stroking their whiskers with their paws. In the middle of the room, the bride and bridegroom were seen standing in the scooped-out rind of a cheese; and kissing each other incessantly, before the eyes of all present. They were already betrothed, and were to be married immediately.

Strangers were arriving every moment; the mice almost trod each other to death; and the bridal pair had placed themselves just in the centre of the doorway, so that one could get neither out nor in. The whole room was, like the passage, covered with the rind of bacon; this was all the entertainment given. For dessert, however, a pea was exhibited, in which a little mouse, belonging to the family, had bitten the initials of the married couple. Was not this an exquisite idea?

All the mice agreed that the wedding had been extremely genteel, and the conversation delightful.

So now Hialmar returned home; he had certainly been in most distinguished company; but still, he felt as though he had rather lowered himself, by becoming so small, and wearing the uniform of a tin soldier.

FRIDAY.

"It is wonderful what a number of old people there are, always wanting to have me with them," said the Dustman; "especially those who have done anything wicked.

"'Dear, good Dustman,' they say to me, 'we cannot sleep a wink all night; we lie awake, and see all our bad deeds sitting on the edge of the bed, like little ugly goblins, and sprinkling hot water over us. If you would but come and drive them away, so that we could have a little sleep;' and then they sigh so deeply, 'we will be sure to pay you well. Good-night, Dustman, the money is lying at the window.'—But I do not come for money," said the Dustman.

"What are we to do to-night?" asked Hialmar.

"Why, I do not know whether you would like to go again to a wedding? The one of which I am now speaking is quite of another kind from yesterday's. Your sister's great doll, that looks like a man, and is called Herman, is going to marry the doll Bertha; besides which, it is a birthday, so they will doubtless receive a great many presents."

"Oh yes! I know that already," said Hialmar; "when-ever the dolls want new clothes, my sister calls it either their birthday or their wedding-day. They must certainly have been married a hundred times already."

"Yes, but to-night they will be married for the hundred and first time; and when it has come to that number, they can never be married again. So this time the wedding will be splendid! only look!"

And Hialmar looked upon the table, where stood the



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"Six swans drew the boat along."

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little doll's house ; the windows were lighted up, and tin soldiers presented arms at the door. The bride and bridegroom were sitting on the ground, and leaning against the leg of the table ; they seemed very thoughtful ; there was, perhaps, good reason for being so. But the Dustman had, meanwhile, put on his grandmother's black gown, and married them. When the ceremony was over, all the furniture in the room began singing the following pretty song, which had been written by the lead pencil :—

“Waft, gentle breeze, our kind farewell
To the tiny house where the bridefolks dwell,
With their skin of kid-leather fitting so well ;
They are straight and upright as a tailor's ell.
Hurrah, hurrah for bear and belle !
Let echo repeat our kind farewell !”

And now presents were brought to them ; all eatables, however, they declined accepting : love was enough for them to live upon.

“Shall we go into the country, or make a tour in some foreign land ?” asked the bridegroom. So the swallow, who had travelled a good deal, and the old hen, who had hatched five broods of chickens, were consulted. And the swallow spoke of those beautiful, warm countries where bunches of grapes, large and heavy, hang on the vines ; where the air is so balmy, and the mountains of various hues, such as are never known here.

“But then they have not our green cabbages !” said the hen. “One summer, I and all my chickens lived in the country ; there was a gravel-pit in which we might go and scrape about ; besides, we had access to a garden, full of green cabbages. Oh, how green they were ! I cannot imagine anything more beautiful !”

“But one head of cabbage looks exactly like another,” said the swallow ; “and then we so often have wet weather here !”

“One gets accustomed to that,” said the hen.

“But it is so cold, it freezes !”

"That is good for the cabbages," said the hen; "besides which, it can be warm sometimes. Did we not, four years ago, have a summer which lasted five weeks? It was so hot that one could hardly breathe. Then, too, we have not all the poisonous animals which they have in foreign countries; and we are free from robbers.

"He is a blockhead who does not think our country the most beautiful of all! He does not deserve to live here!" and at these words, tears rolled down the hen's cheeks. "I too have travelled; I have been twelve miles in a coop. There is no pleasure at all in travelling."

"Yes, the hen is a sensible animal!" said the doll Bertha. "I do not wish to travel over the mountains; one is always going up and down! No, we will go to the gravel-pit, and walk in the garden, among the cabbages."

And so it was settled.

SATURDAY.

"Now may I have some stories?" asked little Hialmar, as soon as the Dustman had put him to sleep.

"We shall have no time for them this evening," said the Dustman, spreading his picture umbrella over him. "Look at these Chinese!" The umbrella resembled a large Chinese plate, with blue trees, and pointed bricks; little Chinese men and women stood nodding their heads among them.

"By to-morrow morning all the world must be put in order," said the Dustman; "it is a festival day—it is Sunday. I must go to the church-tower, to see whether the little spirits of the church are rubbing the bells, so as to make them ring merrily. I must away to the fields, to see that the winds are sweeping the dust off the grass and leaves.

"I must take down the stars, in order to brighten them. I put them into my apron, but first they must be numbered; and the holes in which they sit, up in the sky, must be numbered also, that every one may return

to his proper place; else they would not sit firmly, and we should have too many falling stars, one coming down after another."

"Listen to me, Mr. Dustman," said an old portrait, which hung by the wall, near where Hialmar was sleeping.

"Do you know that I am Hialmar's great-grandfather? I am much obliged to you for telling the boy stories; but you must not puzzle him. Stars cannot be taken down and brightened; they are bodies like our earth."

"Many thanks, old great-grandfather!" said the Dustman, "many thanks. Thou art certainly very old, but I am older still! I am an old heathen; the Greeks and Romans called me the God of Dreams. I have been in families of the greatest distinction, and I go there still! I know how to deal with great and small! Now it is thy turn; say what thou pleasest!"

"So one is no longer allowed to speak one's mind!" muttered the old portrait.

And presently Hialmar awoke.

SUNDAY.

"Good-evening!" said the Dustman; and Hialmar nodded his head to him, and jumped up to turn his great-grandfather's portrait to the wall, in order that he might not interrupt them, as yesterday.

"Now you shall tell me stories, about the five green peas who all lived in one pod; and about the cock courting the hen; and about the darning-needle who wished to be fashionable, and fancied herself a fine needle."

"One may have too much of a good thing!" said the Dustman. "I would rather show you something else; I will show you my brother. He never comes more than once to any one; and whomsoever he visits, he takes on his horse, and tells him a story. He knows only two stories—the one unspeakably delightful, such as no one in the world can imagine; the other so dreadful, so horrible—it is not to be described."

And the Dustman lifted little Hialmar up to the window, saying, "There is my brother, the other Dustman, he is also called Death! You see he is not so frightful as he is represented in picture-books, where he seems to be all bones. No, he wears clothes embroidered with silver; it is the gayest of uniforms! a mantle of black velvet flies over his horse, behind him. See how he gallops!"

And Hialmar saw the other Dustman ride on, and take old and young with him on his horse; some he placed in front, and others behind; but he always asked first, what sort of a journal they had to show.

"Good!" they all replied. "Yes, but let me see it," said he. So they were obliged to show it to him; and all those who had "Very Good" written in it, were put in front of the horse, and heard the story that was so delightful. But those who had "Pretty Good" or "Bad" inscribed in their journal, were obliged to get up behind, and listen to the horrible story. They trembled and wept; they tried to jump down from the horse's back, but that they could not do, for they were as firmly fixed on as if they had grown there.

"Death is a most beautiful Dustman," said Hialmar. "I am not afraid of him."

"That you should not be," said the Dustman; "only take care to have a good journal to show."

"Ah, this is very instructive," muttered the great-grandfather's portrait. "It is always of use to give one's opinion." He was now satisfied.

These are the stories of the Dustman; perhaps he may tell you more this very evening.

THE DAISY.

LISTEN to my story!

In the country, close by the roadside, there stands a summer-house—you must certainly have seen it. In

front is a little garden full of flowers, inclosed by white palings with green knobs ; and on a bank outside the palings there grew, amidst the freshest of grass, a little daisy. The sun shone as brightly and warmly upon the daisy as upon the splendid large flowers within the garden, and therefore it grew hourly ; so that one morning it stood fully open with its delicate white gleaming leaves, which, like rays, surrounded the little yellow sun in their centre.

It never occurred to the little flower that no one saw her, hidden as she was among the grass. She was quite contented : she turned toward the warm sun, looked at it, and listened to the lark who was singing in the air.

The daisy was as happy as if it were the day of some high festival, and yet it was only Monday. The children were at school ; and, whilst they sat upon their forms and learned their lessons, the little flower upon her green stalk learned from the warm sun, and everything around her, how good God is.

Meanwhile, the little lark expressed clearly and beautifully all she felt in silence ! And the flower looked up with a sort of reverence to the happy bird who could fly and sing ; it did not distress her that she could not do the same. "I can see and listen," thought she ; "the sun shines on me, and the wind kisses me. Oh ! how richly am I blessed."

There stood within the palings several grand, stiff-looking flowers ; the less fragrance they had, the more airs they gave themselves. The peonies puffed themselves out in order to make themselves larger than the roses. The tulips had the gayest colours of all ; they were perfectly aware of it, and held themselves as straight as a candle, that they might be the better seen.

They took no notice at all of the little flower outside the palings ; but she looked all the more upon them, thinking, "How rich and beautiful they are ! Yes, that noble bird will surely fly down and visit them.

How happy am I, who live so near them and see their beauty ! ”

Just at that moment, “quirrevit ! ” the lark did fly down ; but he came not to the peonies or the tulips ; no, he flew down to the poor little daisy in the grass, who was almost frightened from pure joy, and knew not what to think, she was so surprised.

The little bird hopped about, and sang, “ Oh, how soft is this grass ! and what a sweet little flower blooms here, with its golden heart, and silver garment ! ” For the yellow centre of the daisy looked just like gold, and the little petals around gleamed silver white.

How happy the little daisy was ! No one can imagine how happy. The bird kissed her with his beak, sang to her, and then flew up again into the blue sky. It was a full quarter of an hour before the flower recovered herself. Half ashamed, and yet completely happy, she looked at the flowers in the garden ; they must certainly be aware of the honour and happiness that had been conferred upon her ; they must know how delighted she was.

But the tulips held themselves twice as stiff as before, and their faces grew quite red with anger. As to the peonies, they were so thick-headed—it was, indeed, well that they could not speak, or the little daisy would have heard something not very pleasant. The poor little flower could see well that they were in an ill-humour, and she was much vexed at it.

Soon after a girl came into the garden with a knife sharp and bright ; she went up to the tulips and cut off one after another. “ Oh ! that is horrible,” sighed the daisy ; “ it is now all over with them.” The girl then went away with the tulips.

How glad was the daisy that she grew in the grass outside the palings, and was a despised little flower ! She felt really thankful ; and when the sun set, she folded her leaves, went to sleep, and dreamed all night of the sun and the beautiful bird.

The next morning, when our little flower, fresh and cheerful, again spread out all her white leaves in the bright sunshine and clear blue air, she heard the voice of the bird ; but he sang so mournfully.

Alas ! the poor lark had good reason for sorrow ; he had been caught, and put into a cage close by the open window. He sang of the joys of a free and unrestrained flight ; he sang of the young green corn in the fields, and of the pleasure of being borne up by his wings in the open air. The poor bird was certainly very unhappy ; he sat a prisoner in his narrow cage !

The little daisy would so willingly have helped him, but how could she ? Ah, that she knew not ; she quite forgot how beautiful all around her was, how warmly the sun shone, how pretty and white her leaves were. Alas ! she could only think of the imprisoned bird—for whom it was not in her power to do anything.

All at once two little boys came out of the garden ; one of them had a knife in his hand, as large and as sharp as that with which the girl had cut the tulips. They went up straight to the little daisy, who could not imagine what they wanted.

“ Here we can cut a nice piece of turf for the lark,” said one of the boys ; and he began to cut deep all round the daisy, leaving her in the centre.

“ Tear out the flower,” said the other boy ; and the little daisy trembled all over for fear ; for she knew that if she were torn out she would die, and she wished so much to live, as she was to be put into the cage with the imprisoned lark.

“ No, leave it alone !” said the first, “ it looks so pretty ;” and so it was left alone, and was put into the lark’s cage.

But the poor bird loudly lamented the loss of its freedom, and beat its wings against the iron bars of its cage ; and the little flower could not speak, could not say a single word of comfort to him, much as she wished to do so. Thus passed the whole morning.

"There is no water here!" said the imprisoned lark; "they have all gone out and forgotten me; not a drop of water to drink! My throat is dry and burning! there is fire and ice within me; and the air is so heavy! Alas! I must die; I must leave the warm sunshine, the fresh green trees, and all the beautiful things which God has created."

And then he pierced his beak into the cool grass, in order to refresh himself a little; and his eye fell upon the daisy, and the bird bowed to her, and said, "Thou too wilt wither here, thou poor little flower! They have given me thee, and the piece of green around thee, instead of the whole world which I possessed before! Every little blade of grass is to be to me a green tree, thy every white petal a fragrant flower! Alas! thou only remindest me of what I have lost."

"Oh, that I could comfort him!" thought the daisy; but she could not move. Yet the fragrance which came from her delicate blossom was stronger than is usual with this flower; the bird noticed it, and although, panting with thirst, he tore the green blades in very anguish, he did not touch the flower.

It was evening, and yet no one came to bring the poor bird a drop of water; he stretched out his slender wings, and shook them convulsively. His song was a mournful "pipi"; his little head bent towards the flowers; and the bird's heart broke from thirst and desire. The flower could not now, as on the preceding evening, fold together her leaves and sleep; she bent down sad and sick to the ground.

The boys did not come till the next morning; and when they saw the bird was dead, they wept bitterly. They dug a pretty grave, which they adorned with flower petals; the bird's corpse was put into a pretty red box—royally was the poor bird buried! While he lived and sang they forgot him, left him suffering in his cage, and now, he was highly honoured and bitterly bewailed.

But the piece of turf with the daisy in it was thrown

out into the street: no one thought of her who had felt most for the little bird, and who had so much wished to comfort him.

THE BUCKWHEAT.

IF, after a tempest, you chance to walk through a field where buckwheat is growing, you may observe that it is burned as black as though a flame of fire had passed over it; and, should you ask the reason, the peasant will tell you, "The lightning has done it."

But how is it that the lightning has done it? I will tell you what the sparrow told me; and the sparrow heard the story from an old willow-tree, which grew, and still grows, close to a field of buckwheat.

This willow-tree is tall and highly respectable, but, at the same time, old and wrinkled. Its trunk has been riven asunder from top to bottom; grass and brambles grow out of the gap; the tree bends forward, and the branches hang down almost to the ground, looking like long green hair.

There were different kinds of corn growing in the fields around the willow—rye, wheat, and oats—the beautiful oats, whose ears, when they are ripe, look like a number of little yellow canary-birds, sitting upon one branch. The corn-ears were richly blessed; and the fuller they were, the lower they bowed their heads in pious humility.

But there was also a field of buckwheat, lying just in front of the old willow-tree: the buckwheat bowed not like the rest of the corn; he stood stiff and proud.

"I am quite as rich as the wheat," said he; "and besides, I am so much more handsome. My flowers are as beautiful as the blossoms of the apple-tree; it is delightful to look at me and my companions. Do you know anything more beautiful than we are, you old willow-tree?"

And the willow-tree bent his head, as much as to say,

"Yes, indeed I do!" But the buckwheat was puffed up with pride, and said, "The stupid tree! he is so old that grass is growing out of his body."

Now came a dreadful storm; all the flowers of the field folded their leaves, or bent their heads, whilst it passed over them; the buckwheat, however, in his pride, still stood erect.

"Bow thy head as we do!" said the flowers.

"I have no need," said the buckwheat.

"Bow thy head as we do," said the corn. "The angel of storms comes flying hitherward; he has wings which reach from the clouds to the earth; he will strike thee down, before thou hast time to plead for mercy!"

"No, I will not bow!" said the buckwheat.

"Close thy flowers, and fold thy leaves," said the old willow-tree; "look not into the flash, when the cloud breaks. Even men dare not do that; for in the flash, one looks into God's heaven, and that sight can dazzle even human eyes. What, then, would it prove to mere vegetables like us, if we should dare to do so—we, who are so inferior to men?"

"So inferior, indeed!" said the buckwheat. "Now then, I *will* look right into God's heaven." And in his pride and haughtiness, he did gaze upon the lightning without shrinking. Such was the flash, that it seemed as if the whole world was in flames.

When the tempest was over, flowers and corn, greatly refreshed by the rain, once more breathed pure air; but the buckwheat had been burned as black as coal by the lightning: it stood on the field a dead, useless plant.

The old willow-tree waved its branches to and fro in the wind; and large drops of water fell from the green leaves, as though the tree wept. And the sparrows asked, "Why weepest thou? It is so beautiful here! See how the sun shines; how the clouds pass over the clear sky; how sweet is the fragrance of the flowers! Why, then, weepest thou, old willow-tree?"

And the willow-tree told of the buckwheat's pride and

haughtiness ; and of the punishment which followed. I, who relate this story, heard it from the sparrows—they told it to me one evening, when I asked them for a tale.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES.

MANY years ago there was an Emperor who was so very fond of new clothes that he spent all his money in dress. He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers ; nor did he care to go either to the theatre or to the chase, except for the opportunities then afforded him of displaying his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day ; and, as of any other king or emperor, one is accustomed to say, "He is sitting in council," it was always said of him, "The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe."

Time passed away merrily in the large town which was his capital ; strangers arrived every day at the court. One day two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colours and elaborate patterns ; the clothes made from which should have the wonderful property of remaining invisible to every one who was unfit for the office he held, or who was extraordinarily simple in character.

"These must indeed be splendid clothes !" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might, at once, find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish ! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers, in order that they might begin their work at once.

So the two pretended weavers set up two looms, and affected to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread ; put both into their own knapsacks ;

and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

"I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my cloth," said the Emperor to himself, after some little time had elapsed. He was, however, rather embarrassed, when he remembered that a simpleton, or one unfit for his office, would be unable to see the manufacture. "To be sure," he thought, "he had nothing to risk in his own person; but yet, he would prefer sending somebody else, to bring him intelligence about the weavers and their work, before he troubled himself in the affair."

All the people throughout the city had heard of the wonderful property the cloth was to possess; and all were anxious to learn how wise, or how ignorant, their neighbours might prove to be.

"I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers," said the Emperor at last, after some deliberation; "he will be best able to see how the cloth looks; for he is a man of sense, and no one can be more suitable for his office than he is."

So the faithful old minister went into the hall, where the knaves were working with all their might at their empty looms. "What can be the meaning of this?" thought the old man, opening his eyes very wide. "I cannot discover the least bit of thread on the looms!" However, he did not express his thoughts aloud.

The impostors requested him very courteously to be so good as to come nearer their looms; and then asked him whether the design pleased him, and whether the colours were not very beautiful; at the same time pointing to the empty frames. The poor old minister looked and looked, he could not discover anything on the looms, for a very good reason—there was nothing there.

"What!" thought he again, "is it possible that I am a simpleton? I have never thought so myself; and no one must know it now, if I am so. Can it be that I am unfit for my office? No, that must not be said either. I will never confess that I could not see the stuff."

"Well, Sir Minister!" said one of the knaves, still pretending to work, "you do not say whether the stuff pleases you."

"Oh, it is excellent!" replied the old minister, looking at the loom through his spectacles. "This pattern, and the colours—yes, I will tell the Emperor without delay how very beautiful I think them."

"We shall be much obliged to you," said the impostors; and then they named the different colours and described the pattern of the pretended stuff. The old minister listened attentively to their words, in order that he might repeat them to the Emperor; and then the knaves asked for more silk and gold, saying that it was necessary to complete what they had begun. However, they put all that was given them into their knapsacks, and continued to work, with as much apparent diligence as before, at their empty looms.

The Emperor now sent another officer of his court to see how the men were getting on, and to ascertain whether the cloth would soon be ready. It was just the same with this gentleman as with the minister; he surveyed the looms on all sides, but could see nothing at all but the empty frames.

"Does not the stuff appear as beautiful to you as it did to my lord the minister?" asked the impostors of the Emperor's second ambassador; at the same time making the same gestures as before, and talking of the design and colours which were not there.

"I certainly am not stupid!" thought the messenger. "It must be that I am not fit for my good, profitable office! That is very odd; however, no one shall know anything about it." And accordingly he praised the stuff he could not see, and declared that he was delighted with both colours and patterns.

"Indeed, please your Imperial Majesty," said he to his sovereign, when he returned, "the cloth which the weavers are preparing is extraordinarily magnificent."

The whole city was talking of the splendid cloth which

the Emperor had ordered to be woven at his own expense.

And now the Emperor himself wished to see the costly manufacture whilst it was still on the loom. Accompanied by a select number of officers of the court, among whom were the two honest men who had already admired the cloth, he went to the crafty impostors, who, as soon as they were aware of the Emperor's approach, went on working more diligently than ever; although they still did not pass a single thread through the looms.

"Is not the work absolutely magnificent?" said the two officers of the crown, already mentioned. "If your Majesty will only be pleased to look at it! What a splendid design! what glorious colours!" and, at the same time, they pointed to the empty frames; for they imagined that every one else could see this exquisite piece of workmanship.

"How is this?" said the Emperor to himself. "I can see nothing! this is indeed a terrible affair! Am I a simpleton, or am I unfit to be an Emperor? That would be the worst thing that could happen.—Oh! the cloth is charming," said he aloud. "It has my complete approval." And he smiled most graciously, and looked closely at the empty looms; for on no account would he say that he could not see what two of the officers of his court had praised so much.

All his retinue now strained their eyes, hoping to discover something on the looms, but they could see no more than the others. Nevertheless, they all exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful!" and advised his Majesty to have some new clothes made from this splendid material, for the approaching procession.

"Magnificent! charming! excellent!" resounded on all sides; and every one was uncommonly gay. The Emperor shared in the general satisfaction; and presented the impostors with the riband of an order of knighthood, to be worn in their button-holes, and bestowed on them the title of "Gentlemen Weavers."

The rogues sat up the whole of the night before the day on which the procession was to take place, and had sixteen lights burning, so that every one might see how anxious they were to finish the Emperor's new suit. They pretended to roll the cloth off the looms; cut the air with their scissors; and sewed with needles without any thread in them. "See!" cried they at last, "the Emperor's new clothes are ready!"

And now the Emperor, with all the grandees of his court, came to the weavers; and the rogues raised their arms, as if in the act of holding something up, saying, "Here are your Majesty's trousers! Here is the scarf! Here is the mantle! The whole suit is as light as a cobweb; one might fancy one has nothing at all on, when dressed in it. That, however, is the great virtue of this delicate cloth."

"Yes, indeed!" said all the courtiers, although not one of them could see anything of this exquisite manufacture.

"If your Imperial Majesty will be graciously pleased to take off your clothes, we will fit on the new suit, in front of the looking-glass."

The Emperor was accordingly undressed, and the rogues pretended to array him in his new suit; the Emperor turning round, from side to side, before the looking-glass.

"How splendid his Majesty looks in his new clothes; and how well they fit!" every one cried out. "What a design! What colours! These are indeed royal robes!"

"The canopy which is to be borne over your Majesty in the procession is waiting," announced the chief master of the ceremonies.

"I am quite ready," answered the Emperor. "Do my new clothes fit well?" asked he, turning himself round again before the looking-glass, in order that he might appear to be examining his handsome suit.

The lords of the bedchamber, who were to carry his Majesty's train, felt about on the ground, as if they

were lifting up the ends of the mantle, and pretended to be carrying something; for they would by no means betray anything like simplicity or unfitness for their office.

So now the Emperor walked under his high canopy in the midst of the procession, through the streets of his capital; and all the people standing by, and those at the windows, cried out, "Oh, how beautiful are our Emperor's new clothes! What a magnificent train there is to the mantle; and how gracefully the scarf hangs!"

In short, no one would allow that he could not see these much-admired clothes; because, in doing so, he would have declared himself either a simpleton or unfit for his office. Certainly, none of the Emperor's various suits had ever made so great an impression as these invisible ones.

"But the Emperor has nothing at all on!" said a little child. "Listen to the voice of innocence!" exclaimed his father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.

"But he has nothing at all on!" at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he knew that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now. And the lords of the bedchamber took greater pains than ever to appear holding up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold.

THE REAL PRINCESS.

THERE was once a Prince who wished to marry a Princess; but then she must be a real Princess. He travelled all over the world in hopes of finding such a lady; but there was always something wrong. Princesses he found in plenty; but whether they were real Princesses it was impossible for him to decide, for now one thing, now

another, seemed to him not quite right about the ladies. At last he returned to his palace quite cast down, because he wished so much to have a real Princess for his wife.

One evening a fearful tempest arose. It thundered and lightened, and the rain poured down from the sky in torrents; besides, it was as dark as pitch. All at once there was heard a violent knocking at the door, and the old King, the Prince's father, went out himself to open it.

It was a Princess who was standing outside the door. What with the rain and the wind, she was in a sad condition. The water trickled down from her hair, and her clothes clung to her body. She said she was a real Princess.

"Ah, we shall soon see that!" thought the old Queen-mother. However, she said not a word of what she was going to do; but went quietly into the bedroom, took all the bed-clothes off the bed, and put three little peas on the bedstead. She then laid twenty mattresses one upon another over the three peas, and put twenty feather-beds over the mattresses.

Upon this bed the Princess was to pass the night.

The next morning she was asked how she had slept. "Oh, very badly indeed!" she replied. "I have scarcely closed my eyes the whole night through. I do not know what was in my bed, but I had something hard under me, and am all over black and blue. It has hurt me so much!"

Now it was plain that the lady must be a real Princess, since she had been able to feel the three little peas through the twenty mattresses and twenty feather-beds. None but a real Princess could have had such a delicate sense of feeling.

The Prince accordingly made her his wife; being now convinced that he had found a real Princess. The three peas were, however, put into the cabinet of curiosities, where they are still to be seen, provided they are not lost.

Was not this a lady of real delicacy?

THE TOP AND THE BALL.

A top and a ball were lying close together in a drawer, among other playthings.

Thus said the top to the ball :

"Why should we not become bride and bridegroom, since we are thrown so much together?"

But the ball, who was made of morocco leather, and fancied herself a very fashionable young lady, would not hear of such a proposal.

The next day, the little boy to whom the playthings belonged, came to the drawer; he painted the top red and yellow, and drove a brass nail through the middle of it; it was glorious after that to see the top spin round.

"Look at me now!" said he to the ball; "what do you say to me now? Why should not we become man and wife? We suit each other so well; you can jump, and I can spin; it would not be easy to find a couple happier than we should be."

"Do you think so?" said the ball; "perhaps you do not know that my father and mother were morocco slippers, and that I have cork in my body."

"Yes; but I am made of mahogany," said the top; "the Burgomaster manufactured me with his own hands; for he has a lathe of his own, and took great pleasure in turning me."

"Can I trust you in this?" said the ball.

"May I never be whipped again if I lie," said the top.

"You don't talk amiss," said the ball; "but I am not at liberty, I am as good as betrothed to a young swallow. Whenever I fly up in the air, he puts his head out of his nest and says, 'Will you marry me?' I have said yes to him in my heart, and that is almost the same as a betrothal. But one thing I promise you, I will never forget you!"

"That will be of great use!" said the top; and no more was then said on the subject.

Next day the ball was taken out. The top saw it fly like a bird into the air, so high that it could be seen no longer; it came back again, but every time it touched the ground it sprang higher than before. Either love, or the cork she had in her body, must have been the cause of this.

The ninth time she did not return; the boy sought and sought, but she was gone.

"I know well where she is," sighed the top; "she is in the swallow's nest, celebrating her wedding." The more the top thought of it, the more amiable did the ball appear to him; that she could not be his, only made his love the more vehement. Another had been preferred to him; he could not forget that! And the top spun and hummed; but was always thinking of the dear ball, who in his imagination grew more and more amiable. Thus passed several years, and there was constant love!

The top was no longer young. However, he was one day gilded all over; never before had he looked so handsome. He was now a gilt top, and spun most bravely, humming all the time: yes, that was famous! But all at once he sprang too high, and was gone! They sought and sought, even in the cellar; he was nowhere to be found.

Where was he?

He had jumped into a barrel full of all sorts of rubbish—cabbage-stalks, sweepings, dust, etc., which had fallen in from the gutter.

"Alas! here I lie, my gay gilding will soon be spoiled; and what sort of trumpery can I have fallen in with?" And he peeped at a long cabbage-stalk which lay fearfully near him, and at a strange round thing somewhat like an apple. But it was not an apple, it was an old ball, which had lain several years in the gutter, and was quite soaked through with water.

"Thank goodness! At last I see an equal, with whom I may speak," said the ball, looking fixedly at the gilt top. "I am made of real morocco, sewed together by

a young lady's hands, and I have cork in my body ; but I shall never again be noticed by any one ! I was on the point of marriage with the swallow when I fell into the gutter, and there I have lain five years, and am now wet through. Only think what a wearisome time it is for a young lady to be in such a situation ! ”

But the top answered not a word ; he thought on his long-lamented companion ; and the more he heard the more certain he became that it was she herself.

The servant-maid now came, and was going to turn the barrel over. “ Hurrah ! ” exclaimed she, “ there is the gilt top. ”

And the top was brought back to the play-room ; it was used and admired as before : but nothing more was heard of the ball, nor did the top ever even speak of his former love for her ; such a feeling must have passed away. How could it be otherwise, when he found that she had lain five years in the gutter, and that she was so much altered he scarcely knew her again when he met her in the barrel among rubbish ?

THE GARDEN OF PARADISE.

THERE was once a young Prince ; no one had so many and such beautiful books as he had. He could read in them the history of all the events which have ever happened in the world, and also see them represented in splendid pictures. He could gain from his books all the information he wanted about any country, or people whatsoever.

But there was not in them a word of what he most desired to know, viz., where the Garden of Paradise was to be found.

When the Prince was a very little boy, just beginning to go to school, his grandmother told him that every flower in the Garden of Paradise tasted like the sweetest

of cakes, and the stems like the choicest of wines. On one plant there grew history, on another geography, on a third the German language. Whoever ate the flower immediately knew his lesson; the more he ate, the more he learned of history, geography, or German.

At that time, the young Prince believed all this. But by and by, when he had grown bigger and wiser, and had learned more, he saw plainly that what constituted the beauty of the Garden of Paradise must be something quite different.

"Oh! why did Eve touch the Tree of Knowledge? Why did Adam eat of the forbidden fruit? Had I been in their place, it would never have happened. Sin would never have entered the world!"

So said he then; and when he was seventeen, he still said the same. The Garden of Paradise occupied all his thoughts.

One day he went into the wood; he went alone, for, to wander thus was his chief delight.

The evening approached, the clouds gathered, the rain poured down, as if all the sky was nothing but a vast flood-gate; it was as dark as we might suppose it to be at night-time in the deepest of wells. The Prince now slipped among the wet grass, now stumbled over bare rocks, which projected from the stony ground. Everything was dripping with water; the poor Prince had not a dry thread on his skin. He was obliged to creep over great blocks of stone, where the water trickled down from the moss.

His strength was just failing him, when he heard a strange rustling, and saw before him a large lighted cavern. A fire was burning in the centre, at which a stag might have been roasted whole, and, indeed, this was the case; a very fine stag, with his branching antlers, was placed on the spit, and was slowly turned between the stems of two fir-trees. An aged woman, but tall and strong as if she were a man in disguise, sat by the fire, throwing upon it one piece of wood after another.

"Come nearer," said she; "sit down by the fire and dry your clothes."

"There is a terrible draught here," said the Prince, as he sat down on the ground.

"It will be still worse when my sons come home," answered the woman. "You are now in the Cavern of the Winds; my sons are the four Winds. Do you understand me?"

"Where are your sons?" asked the Prince.

"There is no use in answering stupid questions," said the woman; "my sons do as they please—play at ball with the clouds up there!" and then she pointed to the blue sky above.

"Indeed!" said the Prince; "you speak in rather a harsh manner, and altogether do not seem so gentle as the women I am accustomed to see around me."

"Yes; they have nothing else to do! I must be harsh if I am to control my boys; however, I can control them, although they have stiff necks. Do you see those four sacks hanging by the wall? They have as much respect for them, as you used to have for the rod behind the looking-glass. I puff them together, I tell you, and then they must get into the sacks; we use no ceremony; there they sit, and do not come out till it pleases me. But here comes one of them!"

It was the North Wind: he brought icy coldness with him; large hailstones danced on the ground, and flakes of snow flew around him. He was dressed in a jacket and trousers of bear's-skin, a cap of seal's-skin hung over his ears; long icicles hung from his beard, and one hailstone after another fell from under the collar of his jacket.

"Do not go immediately to the fire," said the Prince, "you may perhaps get your face and hands frost-bitten."

"Frost-bitten!" repeated the North Wind, and he laughed aloud; "frost is my greatest delight! But what spindle-shanked boy are you? How did you get into the Cavern of the Winds?"

"He is my guest," said the old woman; "and if you are not content with this explanation, you shall go into the sack! Now you know my mind."

This was quite sufficient; and now the North Wind related whence he came, and how he had spent the last month.

"I come from the Arctic Ocean," said he; "I have been on the Bear's Island, along with the Russian whalers. I sat by the helm, and slept when they sailed from the North Cape; and, if now and then I awoke for a short time, the stormy petrel would fly about my legs. It is a merry bird; he suddenly claps his wings, then holds them immovably stretched out and soars aloft."

"Do not make your story so long!" said the mother. "And so you came to the Bear's Island?"

"That is a glorious place! the ground seems made on purpose for dancing—flat as a plate. It is composed of half-melted snow overgrown with moss; sharp stones, and the skeletons of whalers and polar bears are strewn over it, looking like the arms and legs of giants, covered with musty green; you would fancy the sun had never shone on them.

"I blew a little into the clouds, in order that the people might be able to see the shed, built from a wreck, and covered with the skin of whales, the fleshy side, all green and red, turned outwards. A living polar bear sat growling on the roof. I walked on the shore, peeped into the birds' nests, looked at the poor naked young ones, who were crying, with their beaks wide open: I blew into their thousand little throats, and they learned to be quiet. The sea-horses, with their swine-like heads, and teeth an ell long, rolled like gigantic worms beneath the waters."

"My son can relate his adventures very pleasantly," said the mother; "my mouth waters when I listen to him."

"And now the fishery began; the harpoon was thrust into the breast of the sea-horse, and a stream of blood

shot up like a fountain, and streamed over the ice. Then I remembered my part of the sport; I made my ships, the rock-like ice mountains, surround the boats. Oh! how all the crew whistled and shouted; but I whistled still louder. They were obliged to unload all the dead whales, and to throw them, with their trunks and cordage, out upon the ice. I shook snow-flakes over them, and drove them to taste sea-water southwards. They will never come again to Bear's Island!"

"Then you have done mischief!" said the mother of the Winds.

"What good I have done, others may relate," said he; "but here comes my brother of the West. I love him the best of all; he smells of the sea, and has a right healthy coldness about him."

"Can that be the delicate Zephyr?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, it is Zephyr certainly," said the old woman; "but delicate he is no longer. In days of yore he was a gallant youth; but those times have long passed away."

The West Wind looked like a wild man, but he had on a sort of padded hat, that he might not be hurt. In his hand he held a club of mahogany wood, hewn in the American forests; it could have been hewn nowhere else.

"Whence come you?" said the mother.

"From those forest wastes," said he, "where the thorny lianas weave hedges between the trees, where the water snake reposes in the damp grass, and men are apparently useless."

"What did you there?"

"I looked at the deep river, marked how it hurled itself from the rocks, and flew like dust towards the clouds, that it might give birth to the rainbow. I saw a buffalo swim down the river—the stream carried him away; a flock of wild geese were swimming also—they flew away when the water fell down the precipice; but the buffalo must have plunged with it—that pleased me, and I then

raised such a storm that the primeval old trees fell to the ground with a crash, broken to splinters."

"And have you done nothing else?" said the old woman.

"I have cut capers in the Savannahs; I have ridden wild horses, and shaken cocoa-nut trees—ah, yes, I have such stories to tell! But we must not tell all we know, that you know well, my old mother!" And he kissed his mother so roughly that she almost fell. He was a wild fellow.

Now came the South Wind in his turban, and floating Bedouin mantle.

"It is very cold here," said he, as he threw wood upon the fire; "one may see that the North Wind has arrived before me."

"It is so hot that a polar bear might be roasted here," said the North Wind.

"Thou art thyself a polar bear," said the South Wind.

"Do you wish, both of you, to go into the sack?" asked the old woman. "Sit down on yonder stone, and tell me where you have been."

"In Africa, mother," answered he. "I have been hunting lions in the land of the Kaffirs, along with the Hottentots. Such beautiful grass grows on those plains, green as olives! The gnu danced there, and the ostrich ran races with me; but I am swifter than he.

"I came to the yellow sands of the desert; there one might fancy one's-self at the bottom of the sea. I met with a caravan; they had just killed their last camel, in hopes of getting water to drink; but they did not find much. The sun was burning over their heads, the sands roasting beneath their feet. There seemed no end to the desert. I rolled myself up in the fine, loose sand, and threw it up into the form of an immense pillar; a famous dance it had!

"You should have seen how puzzled the dromedary looked, and how the merchant drew his caftan over his head. He threw himself down before me as he was

accustomed to do before Allah. There they are all buried ; a pyramid of sand stands over them : if I should one day blow it away, the sun will bleach their bones ; and travellers will see that human beings have passed that way before them ; otherwise they would hardly believe it."

"Then you have only done evil!" said the mother. "March into the sack!" and before he was aware of it, the South Wind was seized, and confined in the sack, which rolled about on the floor until the mother sat down on it ; and then he was obliged to be still.

"These are desperately wild fellows," said the Prince.

"Yes, truly," answered she ; "but they must obey. Here is the fourth."

This was the East Wind, who was dressed like a Chinaman.

"So you come from that corner of the world," said the mother. "I thought you had been to the Garden of Paradise?"

"I shall fly there to-morrow," said the East Wind ; "it is a hundred years to-morrow since I was there. I now come from China, where I danced round the porcelain tower, so that all the bells began to ring. In the street below, the officers were being flogged till the bamboo canes broke upon their shoulders ; and there were people, from the first to the ninth rank, who cried out, 'Thanks, thanks, my fatherly benefactor!' But they did not mean what they said ; and I clinked the bells and sang, 'Tsing, tsang, tsu !'"

"Thou art a wild youth," said the mother ; "it is well that thou goest to-morrow to the Garden of Paradise, as thy visits there always contribute to thy improvement. Remember to drink plentifully from the source of wisdom, and bring me a little flask filled with it."

"I will do so," said the East Wind. "But why hast thou put my brother of the south into the sack? Let him come out ; I want him to tell me all about the bird called the phoenix. The Princess in the Garden of Paradise, when I visit her once in a hundred years, always asks

me about that bird. Open the sack, my ever sweetest mother, and I will give thee two cups full of tea, as fresh and green as when I plucked it."

"Well, then, for the sake of the tea, and because thou art my darling, I will open the sack." She did so, and the South Wind crept forth; but he looked very much cast down because the stranger Prince had seen his disgrace.

"Here is a palm leaf for the Princess," said the South Wind; "it was given to me by the old phoenix—the only one in the world. He has scribbled on it, with his beak, the history of his whole life; the Princess can read it herself.

"I saw the phoenix set fire to his own nest; I saw him as he sat within it, and was consumed like a Hindoo wife. How the dry branches crackled, and how pleasant was the odour that arose from the burning nest! At last everything was consumed by the flames, and the old phoenix was in ashes. But his egg lay glowing in the fire, it burst with a loud noise, and the young one flew out. He is now king over all the birds, and the only phoenix in the world. He has bitten a hole in the leaf I gave you; that is his greeting to the Princess."

"Well, now let us have something to eat," said the mother of the Winds; and accordingly they all sat down to partake of the roasted stag. The Prince sat next to the East Wind, and they soon became good friends.

"Only tell me this," began the Prince; "what Princess is that I heard so much about; and where is the Garden of Paradise?"

"Ha, ha!" said the East Wind, "do you want to go there? Well, then, fly with me to-morrow; but I must tell you that no human being has been there since Adam and Eve's time. You know the Scripture history, I suppose?"

"Of course," said the Prince.

"Well, when they were driven out of it, the Garden of Paradise sank under the earth; but it still retained its

warm sunshine, its balmy air, and all its beauty. The queen of the fairies makes it her abode ; and there also is the Island of Bliss, where death never comes, and where life is so beautiful ! If you seat yourself on my back to-morrow, I will take you there ; I think that may be allowed. But do not talk any longer now, for I wish to sleep."

And accordingly they all went to sleep. The Prince awoke early in the morning, and was not a little astonished to find himself already far above the clouds. He was sitting on the back of the East Wind, who kept tight hold of him, and they flew so high that woods and meadows, rivers and seas appeared like a large illuminated map.

"Good-morning !" said the East Wind ; "you may as well sleep a little longer, for there is not much to be seen on the flat surface beneath us, unless you can find amusement in counting churches ; they stand like little bits of chalk on the green board there below." What he called the green board, were fields and meadows.

"It was uncivil to depart, without taking leave of your mother and brothers," said the Prince.

"That may be excused, as you were asleep," said the East Wind. And now, they flew even faster than before ; how fast, might be seen by the tops of the trees, whose branches and leaves rustled as they passed them ; and by the seas and lakes, for as they crossed them the waves rose higher, and large ships bowed low like swans in the water.

In the evening, when it became dark, the large towns had a most curious appearance. Lights were burning here and there ; it was just like watching the sparks on a burnt piece of paper, as they vanish one after another, till at last, as children say, out goes the sexton and his family.

The Prince clapped his hands, but the East Wind begged him to be quiet and to hold fast, as otherwise he might fall, and remain suspended from the top of a church-steeple.

The eagle flew swiftly over the dark woods, but the East Wind flew still more swiftly ; the Cossack galloped over the desert on his little horse, but the Prince rode in a very different manner.

“ Now you can see the Himalaya Mountains,” said the East Wind ; “ they are the highest in Asia : we shall soon come to the Garden of Paradise.” So they turned more towards the south, and soon inhaled the fragrance of spices and flowers. Figs and pomegranates were growing wild ; red and white grapes hung from the vines. Here they descended, and stretched themselves on the soft grass, while the flowers nodded to the Wind, as if they wished to say, “ Welcome, welcome ! ”

“ Are we now in the Garden of Paradise ? ” asked the Prince.

“ No, not yet,” said the East Wind, “ but we shall soon be there. Do you see yonder rock, and the large cave, in front of which the vine branches hang like large green curtains ? We must go through it. Wrap your cloak around you ; the sun burns here ; but take a step farther, and you will find it as cold as ice. The bird which is flying past the cave has one wing warm as summer, and the other as cold as winter.”

“ So that is the way to the Garden of Paradise,” said the Prince.

They went into the cave. Oh, how freezing it was there ! But this did not last long ; the East Wind spread out his wings ; they shone like the purest flames. Oh, what a cavern ! large blocks of stone, from which water was trickling, hung in the strangest forms above them. The cave was now so narrow that they were obliged to creep along on their hands and feet, and now again high and broad as the free air without. It looked like a subterranean chapel, with mute organ-pipes and petrified organ.

“ Surely we are going through the path of Death to the Garden of Paradise,” said the Prince. But the East Wind answered not a syllable, and pointed to where the loveliest

blue light was beaming to meet them. The rocks above them became more and more like mists, and at last were as clear and bright as a white cloud in the moonlight. They now breathed the softest, balmiest air—fresh as among the mountains, fragrant as among the roses of the valley.

Here flowed a river, as clear as the atmosphere itself. Gold and silver fish swam in it ; purple eels, which emitted blue sparks at every motion, were playing beneath the surface ; and the broad leaves of the water-lily shone with all the colours of the rainbow. The flower itself was like a glowing orange-coloured flame, receiving sustenance from the water, as a lamp from oil. A bridge of marble, shining like glassy pearl, cunningly and delicately carved, led over the water to the Island of Bliss, where bloomed the Garden of Paradise.

The East Wind took the Prince in his arms and bore him over. The flowers and leaves sang the sweetest songs about his childhood, in soft, wavy tones, such as no human voice could imitate.

Whether they were palm-trees or gigantic water-plants that grew here the Prince knew not, but he had never before seen trees so large and full of sap ; and hanging about them in long wreaths were the most singular creepers, such as are seen, painted in gold or bright colours, on the margins of old missals, or winding about initial letters. There were the strangest compounds of birds, flowers, and scrolls.

Close to them, in the grass, stood a flock of peacocks, with their bright tails spread out—yes, indeed, they were peacocks—but no, when the Prince touched them, he found they were not birds but plants. They were large plantain-leaves, that sparkled like the splendid tails of peacocks.

Lions and tigers sprang like cats over green and fragrant hedges, as the flowers of the olive ; and both lions and tigers were tame. The timid wood-turtle, her plumage bright as the loveliest pearl, flapped her wings

against the lion's mane; and the shy antelope stood by, and nodded his head as if he wished to play too.

And now came the Fairy of Paradise. Her garments shone like the sun, and her countenance was as gentle as that of a happy mother rejoicing over her child. She was very young and very beautiful; the fairest of maidens followed her, each having a star sparkling in her hair. The East Wind gave her the leaf of the phoenix, and her eyes beamed with joy.

She took the Prince by the hand, and led him into her palace, the walls of which resembled in colours those of a splendid tulip-petal held towards the sun; the dome was formed by one single bright flower, whose cup appeared the deeper the longer you looked into it.

The Prince stepped to the window and looked through one of the panes; he saw the Tree of Knowledge, with the Serpent, and Adam and Eve, standing by its side. "Were they not driven out?" asked he; and the Fairy smiled, and explained to him, that Time had stamped its image upon every pane, though not such images as we are accustomed to see; nay, rather, there was life itself; the leaves of the trees moved; men came and went, as in a mirror.

He looked through another pane, and there saw Jacob's dream; the ladder rose to Heaven, and angels with their large wings hovered up and down. Yes, everything that had happened in the world lived and moved in these panes of glass. Time only could have made such cunning pictures.

The Fairy smiled, and led the Prince into a high, spacious hall, whose walls seemed covered with transparent paintings, each countenance more lovely than the last. They were millions of blessed spirits, who smiled and sang; the uppermost of them so little, so very little, even more diminutive than the smallest rosebud, marked on paper with one touch.

And in the midst of the hall stood a large tree with luxuriant branches; golden apples, of different sizes, hung

like oranges among the green leaves. This was the Tree of Knowledge, the fruit of which Adam and Eve had eaten. From every leaf there dropped a bright red drop of dew ; it seemed as if the tree wept tears of blood.

"Let us get into the boat," said the Fairy ; "we shall find it so refreshing. The boat is rocked on the swelling waves, without stirring from its place ; but all the countries in the world will appear to glide past us."

And it was strange to see all the coast moving : first came the high, snow-covered Alps, with their clouds and dark fir-trees ; the horn's deep melancholy tones were heard, whilst the herdsman was singing merrily in the valley below.

Then the banyan-trees let their long hanging branches fall into the boat ; coal-black swans glided along the water, and the strangest-looking animals and flowers were to be seen on the shore : it was New Holland which succeeded the high, blue Alps.

And now came the hymns of priests, the dance of savages, accompanied by the noise of drums, and of the wooden tuba. Egypt's cloud-aspiring pyramids, overthrown pillars, and sphinxes sailed by.

The northern lights beamed over the icy mountains of the north ; they were fireworks such as no mortal could imitate. The Prince was so happy ! He saw a hundred times more than we have related here.

"And may I stay here always ?" asked he.

"That depends upon thyself," answered the Fairy. "If thou dost not, like Adam, allow thyself to be led to do what is forbidden, thou mayest stay here always."

"I will not touch the apple on the Tree of Knowledge," said the Prince ; "there are a thousand fruits here quite as beautiful !"

"Examine thyself : if thou art not strong enough, return with the East Wind who brought thee ; he is just going to fly back, and will not return for a hundred years. The time will pass away here as if it were only a hundred hours ; but it is a long time for temptation and sin.

"Every evening when I leave thee, I must invite thee to 'Come with me!' I must beckon to thee, but—beware of attending to my call; come not with me, for every step will but increase the temptation. Thou wilt come into the hall where the Tree of Knowledge stands; I shall sleep among its fragrant hanging branches; thou wilt bend over me, and if thou touchest me, Paradise will sink beneath the earth, and be lost to thee. The sharp wind of the desert will whistle around; the cold rain will drip from thy hair; sorrow and care will be thy inheritance."

"I will stay here," said the Prince. And the East Wind kissed his forehead, and said, "Be strong, and we shall see each other again after a hundred years. Farewell, farewell!" And the East Wind spread out his great wings; they shone like lightning in harvest-time, or the northern lights in winter. Farewell, farewell, resounded from the trees and flowers. Storks and pelicans, like a long streaming ribbon, flew after him, accompanying him to the boundary of the garden.

"Now we will begin our dances," said the Fairy; "and when the sun is sinking, while I am dancing with thee, thou wilt see me beckon, thou wilt hear me say, 'Come with me'; but do not follow. For a hundred years I must repeat this call to thee every evening; every day thy strength will increase, till at last thou wilt not even think of following. This evening will be the first time—I have warned thee!"

The Fairy then led him into a large hall of white transparent lilies; their yellow stamens formed little golden harps, sending forth clear sweet tones resembling those of the flute.

And the sun was setting; the whole sky was like pure gold; and the lilies shone amid the purple gleam, like the loveliest roses. The Prince saw the background of the hall opening, where stood the Tree of Knowledge in a splendour which dazzled his eyes; a song floated over him, sweet and gentle as his mother's voice. It

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seemed as if she said, "My child; my dear, dear child!"

Then the Fairy beckoned gracefully, saying, "Come with me, come with me!" and he rushed to her, forgetting his promise, even on the first evening.

The fragrance, the spicy fragrance around, became stronger; the harps sounded more sweetly; and it seemed as if the millions of smiling heads, in the hall where the Tree was growing, nodded and sang, "Let us know everything! Man is lord of the earth!" And they were no longer tears of blood that dropped from the leaves of the Tree of Knowledge; they were red sparkling stars—so it appeared to him.

"Come with me, come with me!" thus spoke those trembling tones; and the Fairy bent the boughs asunder, and in another moment was concealed within them.

"I have not yet sinned," said the Prince, "neither will I;" and he flung aside the boughs where she was sleeping—beautiful as only the Fairy of the Garden of Paradise could be. She smiled as she slept; he bent over her, and saw tears tremble behind her eyelashes. "Weepest thou on my account?" whispered he. "Weep not, loveliest of creatures!" and he kissed the tears from her eyes.

There was a fearful clap of thunder, more loud and deep than had ever been heard; all things rushed together in wild confusion; the charming Fairy vanished; the blooming Paradise sank low, so low! The Prince saw it sink amid the darkness of night; it beamed in the distance like a little glimmering star; a deadly coldness shot through his limbs; his eyes closed, and he lay for some time apparently dead.

The cold rain beat upon his face, the sharp wind blew upon his forehead, when the Prince's consciousness returned.

"What have I done?" said he. "I have sinned like Adam; I have sinned, and Paradise has sunk low, beneath the earth!"

And he opened his eyes and saw the star in the distance—the star which sparkled like his lost Paradise; it was the morning star in Heaven.

He stood upright, and found himself in the wood, near the Cavern of the Winds. The mother of the Winds sat by his side; she looked very angry, and raised her hand.

“Already, on the first evening!” said she. “Truly I expected it. Well, if thou wert my son, thou shouldest go forthwith into the sack.”

“He shall go there!” said Death. He was a strong old man, with a scythe in his hand, and with large black wings.

“He shall be laid in the coffin, but not now. I shall mark him. Suffer him to wander yet a little while upon the earth, and repent of his sin; he may improve, he may grow good. I shall return one day when he least expects it; I shall lay him in the black coffin.

“If his head and heart are still full of sin, he will sink lower than the Garden of Paradise sank; but if he have become good and holy, I shall put the coffin on my head, and fly to the star yonder. The Garden of Paradise blooms there also; he shall enter, and remain in the star, that bright sparkling star, for ever!”

THE FIR-TREE.

FAR away in the deep forest there once grew a pretty Fir-Tree. The situation was delightful; the sun shone full upon him, the breeze played freely around him, and in the neighbourhood grew many companion fir-trees, some older, some younger.

But the little Fir-Tree was not happy. He was always longing to be tall; he thought not of the warm sun and the fresh air; he cared not for the merry, prattling peasant children who came to the forest to look for strawberries and raspberries. Unless indeed, sometimes,

when, having filled their pitchers, or threaded the bright berries on a straw, they would sit down near the little Fir-Tree, and say, "What a pretty little tree this is;" and then the Fir-Tree would feel very much vexed.

Year by year he grew, and sent forth a long green shoot every year! For you may always tell how many years a fir-tree has lived by counting the number of joints in its stem.

"Oh, that I was as tall as the others are," sighed the little Tree; "then I should spread out my branches so far, and my crown should look out over the wide world around! The birds would build their nests among my branches; and when the wind blew I should bend my head so grandly, just as the others do!"

He had no pleasure in the sunshine, in the song of the birds, or in the red clouds that sailed over him every morning and evening.

In the winter-time, when the ground was covered with the white glistening snow, there was a hare that would come continually scampering about, and jumping right over the little Tree's head, and that was most provoking!

However, two winters passed away, and by the third the Tree was so tall that the hare was obliged to run round it. "Oh! to grow, to grow, to become tall and old, that is the only thing in the world worth living for;" so thought the Tree.

The wood-cutters came in the autumn and felled some among the largest of the trees. This happened every year; and our young fir, who was by this time a tolerable height, shuddered when he saw those grand, magnificent trees fall with a tremendous crash crackling to the earth. Their boughs were then all cut off: terribly naked and lanky and long did the stem look after this; they could hardly be recognised. They were laid one upon another in wagons, and horses drew them away, far, far away from the forest.

Where could they be going? What might be their fortunes?

So next spring, when the swallows and the storks had returned from abroad, the Tree asked them, saying, "Know you not whither they are taken? Have you not met them?"

The swallows knew nothing about the matter, but the stork looked thoughtful for a moment. Then he nodded his head, and said, "Yes, I believe I have seen them! As I was flying from Egypt to this place I met several ships; those ships had splendid masts. I have little doubt that they were the trees that you speak of; they smelled like fir-wood. I may congratulate you, for they sailed gloriously, quite gloriously!"

"Oh that I, too, were tall enough to sail upon the sea! Tell me what it is, this sea! and what it looks like."

"Thank you, it would take too long, a great deal!" said the stork; and away he stalked.

"Rejoice in thy youth!" said the sunbeams; "rejoice in thy luxuriant youth, in the fresh life that is within thee!"

And the wind kissed the Tree, and the dew wept tears over him, but the Fir-Tree understood them not.

When Christmas approached, many quite young trees were felled—trees which were some of them not so tall or of just the same height as the young restless Fir-Tree, who was always longing to be away. These young trees were chosen from the most beautiful; their branches were not cut off; they were laid in a wagon, and horses drew them away, far, far away from the forest.

"Where are they going?" asked the Fir-Tree. "They are not larger than I am, indeed, one of them was much less. Why do they keep all their branches? Where can they be gone?"

"We know! we know!" twittered the sparrows. "We peeped in through the windows of the town below! We know where they are gone. Oh, you cannot think what honour and glory they receive! We looked through the window-panes and saw them planted in a warm room, and decked out with such beautiful things—gilded apples, sweetmeats, playthings, and hundreds of bright candles!"

"And then?" asked the Fir-Tree, trembling in every bough—"and then—what happened then?"

"Oh, we saw no more. That was beautiful—beautiful beyond compare!"

"Is this glorious lot destined to be mine?" cried the Fir-Tree with delight. "This is far better than sailing over the sea. How I long for the time! Oh, that Christmas were come! I am now tall and full of branches, like the others which last year were carried away. Oh, that I were even now in the wagon! that I were in the warm room, honoured and adorned! Then—yes, then, something still better must happen, else why should they take the trouble to decorate me? It must be that something still greater, still more splendid, must happen—but what? Oh, I suffer, I suffer with longing! I know not what it is that I feel."

"Rejoice in our love," said the air and the sunshine. "Rejoice in thy youth and thy freedom!"

But rejoice he never would. He grew and grew, in winter as in summer; he stood there clothed in green, dark green foliage. The people that saw him said, "That is a beautiful tree!" and, next Christmas, he was the first that was felled.

The axe struck sharply through the wood; the Tree fell to the earth with a heavy groan. He suffered an agony, a faintness that he had never expected; he quite forgot to think of his good fortune, he felt such sorrow at being compelled to leave his home—the place whence he had sprung. He knew that he should never see again those dear old comrades, or the little bushes and flowers that had flourished under his shadow—perhaps not even the birds. Neither did he find the journey by any means pleasant.

The Tree first came to himself when, in the courtyard to which he was first taken with the other trees, he heard a man say, "This is a splendid one; the very thing we want!"

Then came two smartly-dressed servants, and carried

the Fir-Tree into a large and handsome saloon. Pictures hung on the walls, and on the mantelpiece stood large Chinese vases with lions on the lids. There were rocking-chairs, silken sofas, tables covered with picture-books, and toys that had cost a hundred times a hundred rix dollars—at least, so said the children.

And the Fir-Tree was planted in a large cask filled with sand, but no one could know that it was a cask, for it was hung with green cloth, and placed upon a carpet woven of many gay colours. Oh, how the Tree trembled! What was to happen next?

A young lady, assisted by the servants, now began to adorn him. Upon some branches they hung little nets cut out of coloured paper, every net filled with sugar plums; from others gilded apples and walnuts were suspended, looking just as if they had grown there, and more than a hundred little wax tapers, red, blue, and white, were placed here and there among the boughs. Dolls that looked almost like men and women—the Tree had never seen such things before—seemed dancing to and fro among the leaves, and highest, on the summit, was fastened a large star of gold tinsel; this was indeed splendid—splendid beyond compare.

“This evening,” they said—“this evening it will be lighted up.”

“Would that it were evening,” thought the Tree. “Would that the lights were kindled, for then—what will happen then? Will the trees come out of the forest to see me? Will the sparrows fly here and look in through the window-panes? Shall I stand here adorned both winter and summer?”

He thought much of it; he thought till he had bark-ache with longing—and barkaches with trees are as bad as headaches with us.

The candles were lighted. Oh, what a blaze of splendour! The Tree trembled in all his branches so that one of them caught fire. “Oh, dear!” cried the young lady, and it was extinguished in great haste.

So the Tree dared not tremble again; he was so fearful of losing something of his splendour, he felt almost bewildered in the midst of all this glory and brightness. And now, all of a sudden, both folding-doors were flung open, and a troop of children rushed in as if they had a mind to jump over him; the older people followed more quietly; the little ones stood quite silent, but only for a moment. Then their jubilee burst forth afresh, they shouted till the walls re-echoed; they danced round the Tree; one present after another was torn down.

"What are they doing?" thought the Tree; "what will happen now?" And the candles burned down to the branches; so they were extinguished, and the children were given leave to plunder the Tree. Oh! they rushed upon him in such riot that the boughs all crackled; had not his summit been festooned with the gold star to the ceiling, he would have been overturned.

The children danced and played about with their beautiful playthings. No one thought any more of the Tree except the old nurse, who came and peeped among the boughs, but it was only to see whether, perchance, a fig or an apple had not been left among them.

"A story! a story!" cried the children, pulling a short, thick man towards the Tree. He sat down, saying, "It is pleasant to sit under the shade of green boughs; besides, the Tree may be benefited by hearing my story: but I shall only tell you one. Would you like to hear about Ivedy Avedy, or about Humpty Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet came to the throne and won the Princess?"

"Ivedy Avedy!" cried some; "Humpty Dumpty!" cried others: there was a famous uproar. The Fir-Tree alone was silent, thinking to himself, "Ought I to make a noise as they do? or ought I to do nothing at all?" He most certainly was one of the company, and had done all that had been required of him.

And the short, thick man told the story of Humpty Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet came to the throne and won the Princess. And the children clapped their hands and called out for another; they wanted to hear the story of Ivedy Avedy also, but they did not get it.

The Fir-Tree stood, meanwhile, silent and thoughtful; the birds in the forest had never related anything like this. "Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet was raised to the throne and won the Princess! Yes, yes, strange things come to pass in the world!" thought the Fir-Tree, who believed it must all be true, because such a pleasant man had related it. "Ah, ah! who knows but I may fall downstairs and win a Princess?"

And he rejoiced in the expectation of being next day again decked out with candles and playthings, gold and fruit. "To-morrow I will not tremble," thought he. "I will rejoice in my magnificence. To-morrow I shall again hear the story of Humpty Dumpty, and perhaps that about Ivedy Avedy likewise." And the Tree mused thereon all night.

In the morning the maids came in.

"Now begins my state anew!" thought the Tree. But they dragged him out of the room, up the stairs, and into an attic chamber, and there thrust him into a dark corner where not a ray of light could penetrate.

"What can be the meaning of this?" thought the Tree. "What am I to do here? What shall I hear in this place?" And he leaned against the wall, and thought and thought. And plenty of time he had for thinking it over, for day after day, and night after night passed away, and yet no one ever came into the room.

At last somebody did come in, but it was only to push into the corner some old trunks. The Tree was now entirely hidden from sight, and apparently entirely forgotten.

"It is now winter," thought the Tree. "The ground is hard and covered with snow; they cannot plant me

now; so I am to stay here in shelter till the spring. Men are so clever and prudent! I only wish it were not so dark and so dreadfully lonely—not even a little hare! Oh, how pleasant it was in the forest, when the snow lay on the ground, and the hare scampered about—yes, even when he jumped over my head, though I did not like it then. It is so terribly lonely here.”

“Squeak! squeak!” cried a little mouse, just then gliding forward. Another followed; they snuffed about the Fir-Tree, and then slipped in and out among the branches.

“It is horribly cold!” said the little mice. “Otherwise it is very comfortable here. Don’t you think so, you old Fir-Tree?”

“I am not old,” said the Fir-Tree; “there are many who are much older than I am.”

“How came you here?” asked the mice; “and what do you know?” They were uncommonly curious. “Tell us about the most delightful place on earth? Have you ever been there? Have you been into the store-room, where cheeses lie on the shelves, and bacon hangs from the ceiling; where one can dance over tallow-candles; where one goes in thin and comes out fat?”

“I know nothing about that,” said the Tree, “but I know the forest, where the sun shines and where the birds sing!” and then he spoke of his youth and its pleasures. The little mice had never heard anything like it before; they listened attentively, and said, “Well, to be sure, how much you have seen! How happy you have been!”

“Happy!” repeated the Fir-Tree, in surprise; and he thought a moment over all that he had been saying. “Yes, on the whole those were pleasant times!” He then told them about the Christmas Eve when he had been decked out with cakes and candles.

“Oh,” cried the little mice, “how happy you have been, you old Fir-Tree!”

"I am not old at all!" returned the Fir; "it is only this winter that I have left the forest; I am just in the prime of life!"

"How well you can talk!" said the little mice. And the next night they came again and brought with them four other little mice, who wanted also to hear the Tree's history, and the more the Tree spoke of his youth in the forest, the more vividly he remembered it, and said, "Yes, those were pleasant times! but they may come again, they may come again! Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet for all that he won the Princess; perhaps I, too, may win a princess!" Then the Fir-Tree thought of a pretty little delicate birch-tree that grew in the forest—a real princess; a very lovely princess was she to the Fir-Tree.

"Who is this Humpty Dumpty?" asked the little mice. Then he related the tale; he could remember every word of it perfectly: and the little mice were ready to jump to the top of the Tree for joy. The night following several more mice came, and on Sunday came also two rats; they, however, declared that the story was not at all amusing, which much vexed the little mice, who, after hearing their opinion, could not like it so well either.

"Do you know only that one story?" asked the rats.

"Only that one!" answered the Tree. "I heard it on the happiest evening of my life, though I did not then know how happy I was."

"It is a miserable story! Do you know none about pork and tallow? No storeroom story?"

"No," said the Tree.

"Well, then, we have heard enough of it!" returned the rats; and they went their ways.

The little mice, too, never came again. The Tree sighed, "It was pleasant when they sat round me, those busy little mice, listening to my words. Now that, too, is all past! However, I shall have pleasure in remembering it, when I am taken from this place."

But when would that be? One morning, people came

and routed out the lumber-room ; the trunks were taken away, the Tree too was dragged out of the corner ; they threw him carelessly on the floor, but one of the servants picked him up and carried him downstairs. Once more he beheld the light of day.

"Now life begins again !" thought the Tree. He felt the fresh air, the warm sunbeams—he was out in the court. All happened so quickly that the Tree quite forgot to look at himself—there was so much to look at all around. The court joined a garden, everything was so fresh and blooming, the roses clustered so bright and so fragrant round the trellis-work, the lime-trees were in full blossom, and the swallows flew backwards and forwards, twittering, "Quirri-virri-vit, my beloved is come !" but it was not the Fir-Tree whom they meant.

"I shall live ! I shall live !" He was filled with delightful hope ; he tried to spread out his branches ; but alas ! they were all dried up and yellow. He was thrown down upon a heap of weeds and nettles. The star of gold tinsel that had been left fixed on his crown now sparkled brightly in the sunshine. Some merry children were playing in the court, the same who at Christmas-time had danced round the Tree. One of the youngest now perceived the gold star, and ran to tear it off.

"Look at it, still fastened to the ugly old Christmas Tree !" cried he, trampling upon the boughs till they broke under his boots.

And the Tree looked on all the flowers of the garden now blooming in the freshness of their beauty ; he looked upon himself, and he wished from his heart that he had been left to wither alone in the dark corner of the lumber-room. He called to mind his happy forest-life, the merry Christmas Eve, and the little mice who had listened so eagerly when he related the story of Humpty Dumpty.

"Past, all past !" said the poor Tree. "Had I but been happy, as I might have been ! Past, all past !"

And the servant came and broke the Tree into small pieces, heaped them up and set fire to them. And the Tree groaned deeply, and every groan sounded like a little shot; the children all ran up to the place and jumped about in front of the blaze, looking into it and crying, "Piff! piff!" But at each of those heavy groans, the Fir-Tree thought of a bright summer day, or a starry winter night in the forest, of Christmas Eve, or of Humpty Dumpty, the only story that he knew and could relate. And at last the Tree was burned.

The boys played about in the court; on the bosom of the youngest sparkled the gold star that the Tree had worn on the happiest evening of his life: but that was past, and the Tree was past, and the story also, past! past! for all stories must come to an end, some time or other.

MOTHER ELDER.

THERE was once a little boy who had caught a cold by getting his feet wet; how he had managed it no one could conceive, for the weather was perfectly fine and dry. His mother took off his clothes, put him to bed, and brought in the tea-pot, intending to make him a cup of good, warm elder-tea.

Just then the pleasant old man who lodged in the uppermost floor of the house came in. He lived quite alone, poor man! He had neither wife nor children of his own, but he loved all his neighbours' children very fondly, and had so many charming stories and fairy tales to tell them, that it was a pleasure to see him among them.

"Now drink your tea, like a good boy," said the mother, "and who knows but you may hear a story."

"Ah, yes, if one could only think of something new!" said the old man, smiling and nodding his head. "But where did the little one get his feet wet?" asked he.

"Where, indeed?" said the mother, "that's just what nobody can make out."

"Mayn't I have a story?" asked the boy.

"Yes, if you can tell me exactly how deep the gutter is in the little street yonder, along which you go to school. I want to know that first."

"The water just comes up to the middle of my boot," replied the boy, "but not unless I walk through the deep hole."

"Ah, then, that's where we got our feet wet!" said the old man. "And now, I suppose, you will call upon me for a tale, but really I don't know any more."

"But you can get one ready in a moment," insisted the boy. "Mother says that everything you look at quickly becomes a fairy tale, and that everything you touch you turn into a story."

"Yes, but those stories and fairy tales are not good for much! The right sort come of their own accord; they tap at my forehead, and cry, 'Here we are!'"

"I hope they will soon come and tap," said the little boy; and his mother laughed, put some elder-flowers into the tea-pot, and poured boiling water over them. "Come, now for a story! Tell me one, pray!"

"Yes, if the stories would but come; but they are proud, and will only visit me when it so pleases them. Hush!" cried he, all of a sudden, "here we have it! Keep a good look-out; now it is in the tea-pot!"

And the little boy looked at the tea-pot; he saw the lid rise up, and the elder-flowers spring forth, fresh and white. They shot out long, thick branches—even out of the spout they shot forth—spreading on all sides, and growing larger and larger, till at last there stood by the bedside a most charming elder-bush, a perfect tree, some of its boughs stretching over the bed and thrusting the curtains aside.

Oh, how full of blossoms was this tree, and how fragrant were those blossoms! In the midst of the tree sat a kind-looking old dame, wearing the strangest dress in the world.

It was green like the elder-leaves, with a pattern of large white elder-flower clusters spreading all over it. One could not be sure whether it was really a gown, or living green leaves and flowers.

"What is her name?" inquired the little boy.

"Why, those old Greeks and Romans," replied the old man, "used to call her Dryad, but we don't understand those outlandish names. The sailors in the New Booths* have a much better name for her; they call her Mother Elder, and that suits her very well. Now listen to me, and keep looking at the pretty elder-tree the while.

"Just such another large tree as that stands among the New Booths; it has grown up in the corner of a miserable little courtyard. Under the shade of this tree there sat, one afternoon, with the glorious sunshine around them, two old people—a very old sailor, and his very old wife.

"They were great-grandparents already, and would soon have to keep their golden wedding-day, but they could not exactly remember on what day it would fall; and Mother Elder sat in the tree above them, looking so pleased, just as she does now. 'Ah, I know which is the golden wedding-day!' said she, but they did not hear her. There they sat, talking over old times.

"'Can't you remember,' said the sailor, 'the days when we were little ones, and used to be always running and playing about in this very same yard where we are sitting now, and how we stuck slips in the ground to make a garden?'

"'To be sure I remember it!' replied the old woman. 'We watered the slips every day, but only one of them took root, and that was an elder-slip, and it shot out its green shoots till it grew up to be this large tree that we old folks are now sitting under.'

"'So it did!' said the sailor; 'and in the corner yonder used to stand a water-pail, where I swam my boats. I carved them out with my own hand—such famous boats

* Nyboder (New Booths) is the quarter of Copenhagen inhabited by the seamen.

they were ! But I soon had to sail myself, in rather larger vessels than those, though.'

" 'Yes, but first we went to school to be made scholars of,' said his wife ; 'and then we were confirmed. We both of us cried, I remember ; and in the afternoon we went hand in hand up to the Round Tower, and looked out upon the world, out over all Copenhagen and the sea ; and then we went to Fredericksberg, where the King and Queen were sailing about the canals in their magnificent barges.'

" 'But those barges were scarcely more like the great ships I sailed in than my poor little boats were ; and oh, for how many, many years I was away on those long voyages !'

" 'Yes, and how often I wept for you !' said she. 'I believed you must be dead and gone for ever, lying low down beneath the deep waters. Many a night have I got up to look at the weather-cock, to see if the wind had changed ; and change it did, over and over again, but still you did not return.

" 'There is one day I shall never forget ; it was pouring with rain : the dustmen had come to the house where I was in service. I came down with the dust-box, and remained standing at the door. Oh, what weather it was ! and while I stood there, the postman came up and gave me a letter ; it was from you.

" 'What a journey that letter had made ! I tore it open and read it ; I laughed and cried by turns, I was so happy. The letter told me you were in the warm countries, where the coffee-trees grow—what charming countries those must be ; it told me so many things, and I fancied I could see all that you had described. And the rain still kept pouring down in torrents, and there I stood at the door with the dust-box. Just then somebody came up behind me, and took hold of me——'

" 'Yes, indeed ; and didn't you give him a good box on the ear ! Didn't his ear tingle after it !'

" 'But I did not know that it was you. You had

arrived as soon as your letter; and you were so handsome!—but that you are still; and you had a large yellow silk handkerchief in your pocket, and a new hat on your head. Oh, what weather it was; the streets were quite flooded.'

"‘And then we were married,’ said the sailor; ‘don’t you remember that? And then we had our first little boy, and after him we had Marie, and Niels, and Peter, and Hans Christian.’

"‘Ah! and how happy it was that they should all grow up to be good, and honest, and industrious, and to be loved by everybody.’

"‘And their children, too—they have little ones now,’ added the old sailor. ‘Yes, they are fine healthy babies, those great-grandchildren of ours! And so it was, I fancy, just about this time of year that we had our wedding.’

"‘Yes, this very day is your golden wedding-day!’ said Mother Elder, putting out her head between the two old people; but they fancied she was their neighbour nodding to them. They gave little heed to her, but again looked at each other, and took hold of each other’s hand.

"‘Presently their children and grandchildren came out into the court; they knew well that this was the golden wedding-day, and had come that very morning to congratulate their parents. But the two old people had quite forgotten that, although they could remember so clearly things that had happened half a century ago.

"‘And the elder-blossoms smelled sweetly; and the sun, which was near setting, shone full into the old couple’s faces. A red rosy light he shed over their features; and the youngest of the grandchildren danced round them, shouting with glee that this evening there should be a grand feast, for they were all to have hot potatoes for supper. Mother Elder nodded her head to them from the tree, and shouted ‘Hurrah!’ as loudly as they did.”

"‘But I don’t call that a tale at all,’ said the little boy in the bed.

"Don't you?" said the kind old story-teller. "Well, suppose we ask Mother Elder what she thinks about it."

"No, you are right, that was not a tale," replied Mother Elder; "but now you shall have one. I will show you how the most charming fairy tales spring out of the commonest incidents of every-day life; were it not so, you know, my pretty elder-bush could hardly have grown out of the tea-pot!"

And then she took the little boy out of bed, pillowing his head upon her bosom, and the elder-boughs laden with blossoms entwined around them, so that they seemed to be sitting in a thick-leaved, fragrant arbour, and the arbour flew away with them through the air—that was most delightful!

Mother Elder had, all of a sudden, changed into a pretty and graceful young girl; her robe was still of the same fresh-green, white-flowered material that Mother Elder had worn. On her bosom rested a real elder-flower cluster, and a whole garland of elder-flowers was wreathed among her curling flaxen hair. Her eyes were large and blue—it was a delight to behold a creature so lovely! And she and the boy embraced, and immediately they were of the same age: they loved each other, and were unspeakably happy.

Hand in hand they walked out of the arbour, and were now in the pretty flower-garden of their home. On the grass plot they found their father's walking-stick. For the children, it seemed, there was life in this stick: as soon as they got astride it, the bright knob of the handle became a fiery, neighing head, a long black mane fluttered to and fro in the wind, four long, slender legs shot out. A fine spirited creature was their new steed, and off he galloped with them round the grass plot—hurrah!

"Now we will ride many miles away," said the boy; "let us ride to the dear old manor house we went to last year." And still they rode round and round the grass plot; the little girl, who, as we know, was no other than Mother Elder, crying out all the while, "Now we are in

the country. Seest thou not yonder pretty cottage? The elder-tree lowers its branches over it, and the cock is strutting about, and scraping up the ground for the hens. See how proudly he strides! And now we are close to the church; it stands high on the hill, among the great oak-trees, one of which is quite hollow. Now we are at the smithy; the fire is blazing, and the half-naked men are banging away with their hammers, and the sparks are flying about all round. Away, away, to the old manor house!"

And all that the little maiden riding on the stick described flew past them; the boy saw it all, and still they only rode round and round the grass plot. Then the children played in one of the walks, and marked out a tiny garden for themselves in the mould; and the girl took one of the elder-blossoms out of her hair and planted it, and it grew up, just as the elder-sprig grew which was planted among the New Booths by the old sailor and his wife when they were little ones, as has been told already.

And hand in hand the children now went on together, just as the children in the New Booths had done; but not up to the Round Tower or to the gardens of Fredericksberg. No, the little girl threw her arms round the little boy's waist, and then away they flew over all Denmark; and spring deepened into summer, and summer mellowed into autumn, and autumn faded into pale, cold winter: and a thousand pictures were mirrored in the boy's eyes and heart; and still the little girl sang to him, "Never, oh never, forget thou this!"

And wherever they flew, the sweet strong perfume of the elder-tree floated round them; the little boy could distinguish the delicious fragrance of the roses blooming in the gardens he flew past, and the wind wafted to him the fresh odour of the beech-trees; but the elder-perfume far excelled these, he thought, for its blossoms nestled to his fairy-like maiden's heart, and over those blossoms he continually bowed his head while flying.

"How beautiful is spring!" exclaimed the young girl, as they stood together in the beech-wood, where the trees

had newly burst into fresh loveliness, where the sweet-scented woodruff grew at their feet, the pale-tinted anemones looking so pretty amid its green. "Oh, would it were always spring in the fragrant Danish beech-wood !

"How beautiful is summer !" said she again, as they passed an ancient baronial castle ; its red stained walls and battlements mirrored in the moat encircling them ; swans swimming in the moat, and peering up into the cool, shady avenues. A sea of green corn waved to and fro in the fields ; tiny red and golden blossoms peeped out of the ditches ; and the hedges were wreathed with wild, wantoning hops, and the bell-flowered white bind-weed. It was evening ; the moon rose large and round ; the meadows were odorous with the scent of haystacks. "Never, oh never, forget thou this !

"How beautiful is autumn !" exclaimed the little maiden ; and the vault of heaven seemed to rise higher and to grow more intensely blue, and the woods became flushed with the richest and most varied hues of crimson, green, and yellow. The hounds bounded past in full cry ; whole flocks of wild-fowl flew screaming over the cairn-stones, to which luxuriant brambles were clinging ; in the far distance lay the deep, blue sea, dotted over with white sails ; old women, young maids, and children were assembled in a barn, picking hops into a great cask : the young ones of the party were singing, and the ancient dames were telling old legends of fairies and enchantments. What could be pleasanter than this ?

"How beautiful is winter !" declared our young damsel ; and behold ! the trees stood around them all covered with hoar-frost, like white branching corals they looked ; the snow crisped under the children's feet with a noise as if they had creaking new boots on, and falling stars, one after another, shot across the sky. The Christmas-tree was lighted up in the parlour ; everybody had had presents given him, and everybody was in good humour ; the peasant's cot in the country was merry with the sound of the violin, and the pancakes disappeared fast !

Even the poorest child might have reason to echo the words, "How beautiful is winter!"

Yes, truly it was beautiful! and it was our fairy maiden who showed all these fair sights to the little boy, and still the elder-perfume floated round him, when a new picture rose up before his eyes—the red flag with its white cross fluttering in the breeze, the very same flag under which the old mariner in the New Booths had sailed. And the boy felt that he was now grown up to be a youth, and that he must go to seek his fortune in the wide world; far away must he go to the warm countries, where grow the coffee-trees, but at their parting the young maiden took the cluster of elder-blossoms from her bosom, and gave it to him. And he kept it carefully; he kept it between the leaves of his hymn-book; and when he was in foreign lands he never took up the book but it opened upon the place where the flower of memory lay, and the oftener he looked at it the fresher, he fancied, it became. He seemed, while he looked at it, to breathe the sweet air of the Danish beech-groves, to see peeping among the tiny elder-flowerets the pretty maiden with her bright blue eyes, and to hear her low whisper, "How beautiful is Denmark in spring, in summer, in autumn, and in winter!" and a hundred fair visions of the past flitted unbidden across his mind.

Many, very many years passed away, and he was now an old man sitting with his old wife under a flowering tree. They held each other by the hand, just as the old couple in the New Booths had done, and they talked, too, of old times, and of their golden wedding-day. The little maiden, with the blue eyes and the elder-blossoms in her hair, sat on the tree above, and nodded her head to them, saying, "To-day is your golden wedding-day!" and then she took two flower clusters out of her hair and kissed them twice: at the first kiss they shone like silver; after the second, like gold; and when she had set them on the two old people's heads each cluster became a gold crown. And thus the two sat there, like a crowned King and

Queen, under the fragrant elder-tree; and the old man began to tell his wife the story about Mother Elder, which had been told him when a little boy; and it seemed to them both that great part of the story was very like their own real history—and they liked that part far the best.

“Yes, so it is!” said the little maiden in the tree. “Some call me Mother Elder, others call me a Dryad, but my proper name is Memory. Here I sit in the tree whilst it grows and grows; I never forget—I remember all things well—I could tell such famous stories. Now let me see if you still have your flower safe.”

And the old man opened his hymn-book; there lay the elder-flower, as fresh as though it had but just been laid between the leaves, and Memory nodded her head: and the two old people with their gold crowns sat under the tree, their faces flushed with the red evening sunlight. They closed their eyes, and then—and then—why then there was an end of the tale.

The little boy lay in his bed; he did not rightly know whether he had been dreaming all this, or whether it had been told him. The tea-pot stood on the table, but no elder-tree was growing out of it; and his friend, the old story-teller, was just on the point of going out at the door. Whilst the boy was rubbing his eyes he was gone.

“How pleasant that was!” said the little boy. “Mother, I have been to the warm countries.”

“Yes, I have no doubt of that!” replied the mother; “after you had drunk two brimful cups of good hot elder-tea, you were likely enough to get into the warm countries!” and she covered him up well for fear he should get chilled. “You have had such a famous sound sleep, while I sat disputing with him as to whether it were a fairy tale, or a real, true history.”

“And where is Mother Elder?” asked the boy.

“She is in the tea-pot,” said his mother, “and there she may stay.”

ELFIN-MOUNT.

SEVERAL large lizards were running nimbly in and out among the clefts of an old tree; they could understand each other perfectly well, for they all spoke the lizards' language. "Only hear what a rumbling and grumbling there is in the old Elfin-mountain yonder!" observed one lizard. "I have not been able to close my eyes for the last two nights; I might as well have had the toothache, for the sleep I have had!"

"There is something in the wind, most certainly!" rejoined the second lizard. "They raise the Mount upon four red pillars till cock-crowing; there is a regular cleaning and dusting going on, and the Elfin-maidens are learning new dances—such a stamping they make in them! There is certainly something in the wind!"

"Yes; I have been talking it over with an earth-worm of my acquaintance," said a third lizard. "The earth-worm has just come from the Mount; he has been grubbing in the ground there for days and nights together, and has overheard a good deal; he can't see at all, poor wretch! but no one can be quicker than he is at feeling and hearing. They are expecting strangers at the Elfin-mountain—distinguished strangers; but who they are, the earth-worm would not say; most likely he did not know. All the wills-o'-the-wisp are engaged to form a procession of torches—so they call it; and all the silver and gold, of which there is such a store in the Elfin-mountain, is being fresh rubbed up, and set out to shine in the moonlight."

"But who can these strangers be?" exclaimed all the lizards with one voice. "What can be in the wind? Only listen! what buzzing and humming!"

Just then the Elfin-mountain parted asunder; and an elderly Elfin damsel came tripping out—she was the old Elfin-King's housekeeper, and distantly related to his

family, on which account she wore an amber heart on her forehead, but was otherwise plainly dressed. Like all other elves, she was hollow in the back. She was very quick and light-footed; trip—trip—trip, away she ran, straight into the marsh, to the night-raven. "You are invited to Elfin-mountain, for this very evening," said she; "but will you not first do us a very great kindness, and be the bearer of the other invitations? You do not keep house yourself, you know; so you can easily oblige us. We are expecting some very distinguished strangers, Trollds in fact; and his Elfin Majesty intends to welcome them in person."

"Who are to be invited?" inquired the night-raven.

"Why, to the grand ball all the world may come; even men, if they could but talk in their sleep, or do a little bit of anything in our way. But the first banquet must be very select; none but guests of the very highest rank must be present. To say the truth, I and the King have been having a little dispute; for I insist that not even ghosts may be admitted to-night. The Mer-King and his daughters must be invited first; they don't much like coming on land, but I'll promise they shall each have a wet stone, or, perhaps, something better still, to sit on; and then, I think, they cannot possibly refuse us this time. All old Trollds of the first rank we must have; also, the River-Spirit and the Nisses; and, I fancy, we cannot pass over the Death-Horse and Kirkegrim: true, they do not belong to our set, they are too solemn for us, but they are connected with the family, and pay us regular visits."

"Caw!" said the night-raven; and away he flew to bear the invitations.

The Elfin-maidens were still dancing in the Elfin-mountain; they danced with long scarfs woven from mist and moonlight, and for those who like that sort of thing it looks pretty enough. The large state-room in the Mountain had been regularly cleaned and cleared out; the floor had been washed with moonshine, and the walls

rubbed with witches' fat till they shone as tulips do when held up to the light. In the kitchen, frogs were roasting on the spit; while divers other choice dishes, such as mushroom seed, hemlock soup, etc., were prepared or preparing. These were to supply the first courses; rusty nails, bits of coloured glass, and such like dainties, were to come in for the dessert; there was also bright saltpetre wine, and ale brewed in the brewery of the Wise Witch of the Moor.

The old Elfin-King's gold crown had been fresh rubbed with powdered slate-pencil; new curtains had been hung up in all the sleeping-rooms—yes, there was indeed a rare bustle and commotion.

"Now, we must have the rooms scented with cows' hairs and swines' bristles; and then, I think, I shall have done my part!" said the Elfin-King's housekeeper.

"Dear papa," said the youngest of the daughters, "won't you tell me now who these grand visitors are?"

"Well!" replied his Majesty, "I suppose there's no use in keeping it a secret. Let two of my daughters get themselves ready for their wedding-day, that's all! Two of them most certainly will be married. The Chief of the Norwegian Trolds, he who dwells in old Dofrefield, and has so many castles of freestone among those rocky fastnesses, besides a gold mine—which is a capital thing, let me tell you—he is coming down here with his two boys, who are both to choose themselves a bride. Such an honest, straightforward, true old Norseman is this mountain chief! so merry and jovial! He and I are old comrades; he came down here years ago to fetch his wife; she is dead now; she was the daughter of the Rock-King at Möen. Oh, how I long to see the old Norseman again! His sons, they say, are rough, unmannerly cubs, but perhaps report may have done them injustice, and at anyrate they are sure to improve in a year or two, when they have sown their wild oats. Let me see how you will polish them up!"

"And how soon are they to be here?" inquired his youngest daughter again.

"That depends on wind and weather!" returned the Elfin-King. "They travel economically; they come at the ship's convenience. I wanted them to pass over by Sweden, but the old man would not hear of that. He does not keep pace with the times, that's the only fault I can find with him."

Just then two wills-o'-the-wisp were seen dancing up in a vast hurry, each trying to get before the other, and to be the first to bring the news.

"They come, they come!" cried both with one voice.

"Give me my crown, and let me stand in the moonlight!" said the Elfin-King.

And his seven daughters lifted their long scarfs and bowed low to the earth.

There stood the Trolld Chief from the Dofrefield, wearing a crown composed of icicles and polished pine cones; for the rest, he was equipped in a bear-skin cloak and sledge-boots; his sons were clad more slightly, and kept their throats uncovered, by way of showing that they cared nothing about the cold.

"Is that a mount?" asked the youngest of them, pointing to it. "Why, up in Norway we should call it a cave!"

"You foolish boy!" replied his father; "a cave you go into, a mount you go up! Where are your eyes, not to see the difference?"

The only thing that surprised them in this country, they said, was that the people should speak and understand their language.

"Behave yourselves now!" said the old man; "don't let your host fancy you never went into decent company before!"

And now they all entered the Elfin-mountain, into the grand saloon, where a really very select party was assembled, although at such short notice that it seemed almost as though some fortunate gust of wind had blown them

together. And every possible arrangement had been made for the comfort of each of the guests; the Mer-King's family, for instance, sat at table in large tubs of water, and they declared they felt quite as if they were at home. All behaved with strict good-breeding except the two young northern Trolds, who at last so far forgot themselves as to put their legs on the table.

"Take your legs away from the plates!" said their father; and they obeyed, but not so readily as they might have done. Presently they took some pine cones out of their pockets and began pelting the lady who sat between them, and then, finding their boots incommode them, they took them off, and coolly gave them to this lady to hold. But their father, the old mountain Chief, conducted himself very differently; he talked so delightfully about the proud Norse mountains, and the torrents, white with dancing spray, that dashed foaming down their rocky steeps with a noise loud and hoarse as thunder, yet musical as the full burst of an organ, touched by a master hand; he told of the salmon leaping up from the wild waters while the Neck was playing on his golden harp; he told of the starlight winter nights when the sledge bells tinkled so merrily, and the youths ran with lighted torches over the icy crust, so glassy and transparent that through it they could see the fishes whirling to and fro in deadly terror beneath their feet; he told of the gallant northern youths and pretty maidens singing songs of old time, and dancing the Hallinge dance—yes, so charmingly he described all this, that you could not but fancy you heard and saw it all. Oh fie, for shame! all of a sudden the mountain Chief turned round upon the elderly Elfin-maiden, and gave her a cousinly salute, and he was not yet connected ever so remotely with the family.

The young Elfin-maidens were now called upon to dance. First they danced simple dances, then stamping dances, and they did both remarkably well. Last came the most difficult of all, the "Dance out of the dance," as it was called. Bravo! how long their legs seemed

to grow, and how they whirled and spun about! You could hardly distinguish legs from arms, or arms from legs. Round and round they went, such whirling and twirling, such whirring and whizzing there was that it made the death-horse feel quite dizzy, and at last he grew so unwell that he was obliged to leave the table.

"Hurrah!" cried the mountain Chief, "they know how to use their limbs with a vengeance! but can they do nothing else than dance, stretch out their feet, and spin round like a whirlwind?"

"You shall judge for yourself," replied the Elfin-King; and here he called the eldest of his daughters to him. She was transparent and fair as moonlight; she was, in fact, the most delicate of all the sisters; she put a white wand between her lips and vanished: that was her accomplishment.

But the mountain Chief said he should not at all like his wife to possess such an accomplishment as this, and he did not think his sons would like it either.

The second could walk by the side of herself, just as though she had a shadow, which elves and trollds never have.

The accomplishment of the third sister was of quite another kind: she had learned how to brew good ale from the Wise Witch of the Moor, and she also knew how to lard alder-wood with glow-worms.

"She will make a capital housewife," remarked the old mountain Chief.

And now advanced the fourth Elfin damsel: she carried a large gold harp; and no sooner had she struck the first chord than all the company lifted their left feet—for elves are left-sided—and when she struck the second chord, they were all compelled to do whatever she wished.

"A dangerous lady, indeed!" said the old Trolld Chief. Both of his sons now got up and strode out of the mount; they were heartily weary of these accomplishments.

"And what can the next daughter do?" asked the mountain Chief.

"I have learned to love the north," replied she; "and I have resolved never to marry unless I may go to Norway."

But the youngest of the sisters whispered to the old man, "That is only because she has heard an old Norse rhyme, which says that when the end of the world shall come, the Norwegian rocks shall stand firm amid the ruins; she is very much afraid of death, and therefore she wants to go to Norway."

"Ho, ho!" cried the mountain Chief; "sits the wind in that quarter? But what can the seventh and last do?"

"The sixth comes before the seventh," said the Elfin-King; for he could count better than to make such a mistake. However, the sixth seemed in no hurry to come forward.

"I can only tell people the truth," said she. "Let no one trouble himself about me, I have enough to do to sew my shroud!"

And now came the seventh and last, and what could she do? Why, she could tell fairy tales, as many as any one could wish to hear.

"Here are my five fingers," said the mountain Chief; "tell me a story for each finger."

And the Elfin-maiden took hold of his wrist, and told her stories, and he laughed till his sides ached; and when she came to the finger that wore a gold ring, as though it knew it might be wanted, the mountain Chief suddenly exclaimed, "Hold fast what thou hast, the hand is thine! I will have thee myself to wife!" But the Elfin-maiden said that she had still two more stories to tell, one for the ring-finger, and another for the little finger.

"Keep them for next winter; we'll hear them then," replied the mountain Chief. "And we'll hear about the 'Loves of the Fir-Tree and the Birch,' about the Valkyria's gifts, too, for we all love fairy legends in Norway, and no one there can tell them so charmingly as thou dost. And then we will sit in our rocky halls, whilst the fir-logs are blazing and crackling in the stove, and drink mead out of the golden horns of the old Norse kings; the Neck

has taught me a few of his rare old ditties ; besides, the Garbo will often come and pay us a visit, and he will sing thee all the sweet songs that the mountain maidens sang in days of yore—that will be most delightful ! The salmon in the torrent will spring up and beat himself against the rock walls, but in vain ; he will not be able to get in. Oh, thou canst not imagine what a happy, glorious life we lead in that dear old Norway ! But where are the boys ? ”

Where were the boys ? Why, they were racing about in the fields and blowing out the poor wills-o'-the-wisp, who were just ranging themselves in the proper order to make a procession of torches.

“ What do you mean by making all this riot ? ” inquired the mountain Chief. “ I have been choosing you a mother, now you come and choose yourselves wives from among your aunts. ”

But his sons said they would rather make speeches and drink toasts, they had not the slightest wish to marry. And accordingly they made speeches, tossed off their glasses and turned them topsy-turvy on the table, to show that they were quite empty ; after this they took off their coats, and most unceremoniously lay down on the table and went to sleep. But the old mountain Chief, the while, danced round the hall with his young bride, and exchanged boots with her, because that is not so vulgar as exchanging rings.

“ Listen, the cock is crowing ! ” exclaimed the lady-housekeeper. “ We must make haste and shut the window-shutters close, or the sun will scorch our complexions. ”

And herewith Elfin-mount closed.

But outside, in the cloven trunk, the lizards kept running up and down, and one and all declared, “ What a capital fellow that old Norwegian Troid is ! ” “ For my part, I prefer the boys, ” said the earth-worm ; but he, poor wretch, could see nothing either of them or of their father, so his opinion was not worth much.

GREAT CLAUS AND LITTLE CLAUS.*

ONCE upon a time there lived in the same village two men bearing the very same name. One of them possessed four horses, the other had only one horse; so, by way of distinguishing them from each other, the proprietor of four horses was called "Great Claus," and he who owned but one horse was known as "Little Claus." And now we shall relate their true and veritable history.

All the week long Little Claus had to plough for Great Claus, and to lend him his one horse, and in return Great Claus lent him his four horses, but only for one day in the week, and that day was Sunday.

Hurrah! a proud man then was Little Claus, and how he brandished his whip over his five horses, for all five were his, he thought, for this one day at least. And the sun shone so brightly, and all the bells in the church tower were ringing; the people were dressed in their best, and walking to church, and as they passed they looked at Little Claus, who was driving his five horses, and he was so pleased that he kept cracking his whip again and again, crying out the while, "Hip, hip, hurrah! five fine horses, and all of them mine!"

"You must not say that," observed Great Claus; "only one of the horses is yours, you know that well enough."

But when another party of church-goers passed close by him, Little Claus quite forgot that he had been told he must not say so, and cried out again, "Hip, hip, hurrah! five fine horses, all mine!"

"Did not I tell you to hold your tongue?" exclaimed Great Claus very angrily. "If you say that again, I'll give your one horse such a blow on the forehead as shall strike him dead on the spot, and then there'll soon be an end to your boasting about your five fine horses."

* "Claus" is a contraction of Nicholas.

"Oh, but I'll never say it again ; indeed, I won't !" said Little Claus, and he quite intended to keep his word. But presently some more people came by, and when they nodded a friendly "Good-morning" to him, he was so delighted, and it seemed to him such a grand thing to have five horses to plough his bit of a field, that he really could not contain himself. He flourished his whip aloft, and shouted out, "Hip, hip, hurrah ! five fine horses, every one of them mine !"

"I'll soon cure you of that !" cried Great Claus in a fury, and, taking up a large stone, he flung it at the head of Little Claus's horse. So heavy was the stone that the poor creature fell down dead.

"Alas, now I have no horses at all !" cried Little Claus, and he began to weep. As soon as he had recovered himself a little, he set to work to flay the skin off his dead horse, dried the skin thoroughly in the air, and then putting it into a sack, he slung the sack across his shoulders, and set out on his way to the nearest town, intending to sell the skin.

He had a long way to go, and the road led him through a large and thickly-grown wood. And here a violent storm burst forth ; the clouds, the rain, and the dark firs, bowed to and fro by the wind, so bewildered poor Claus that he lost his path, and before he could recover it, evening had darkened into night ; he could neither return homewards nor get on to the town. However, not far off stood a large farm-house ; the window-shutters were closed, but Little Claus could see lights shining out through the creaks.

"Perhaps I may get shelter there," thought he ; so he went up to the house, and knocked at the door. The farmer's wife came and opened it to him, but, when she heard what he wanted, she very obligingly told him he must go and ask elsewhere ; he shouldn't come into her house ; her good man was from home, and she couldn't be receiving strangers in his absence.

"Well, then, I must sleep outside, under this stormy

sky," replied Little Claus ; and the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Close by stood a hay-stack, and between it and the house there was a little pent-house with a flat straw roof.

"I'll get up there," said Little Claus to himself, on perceiving this ; "it will make me a capital bed—only I do hope the stork yonder may not take it into his head to fly down and bite my legs ;" for a stork had made his nest on the roof, and had mounted guard beside the nest, as wide awake as could be, although it was night.

So Little Claus crept up on the pent-house, and there he turned and twisted about till he had made himself a right comfortable couch. The window-shutters did not close properly at the top, so that from his high and airy position he could see all that went on in the room.

There he saw a large table spread with bread and wine, roast meat and fried fish. The farmer's wife and the sexton sat at table ; no one else was there. The farmer's wife was pouring out a glass of wine for the sexton, who, meantime, was eagerly helping himself to a large slice of the fish ; he happened to be particularly fond of fish.

"Too bad, really, to keep it all to themselves !" sighed Little Claus. "If they would but give me a little, wee morsel !" and he stretched out his head as near to the window as he could. Oh, what a magnificent cake he could see now ! Why, this was quite a banquet !

Presently he heard the sound of hoof-tramps approaching from the road. It was the farmer riding home.

A regularly good-hearted fellow was this farmer, but he had one peculiar weakness, namely, that he never could endure to see a sexton ; the sight made him half mad. Now, the sexton of the neighbouring town happened to be first cousin to his wife, and they were old playmates and good friends. So, this evening, knowing that the farmer would be from home, he came to pay his cousin a visit ; and the good woman, being very pleased to see him, had brought out all the choice things in her larder wherewith to regale him.

But now, while they were sitting together so comfortably, as they heard the tramp of the farmer's horse, they both started up, and the woman bade the sexton creep into a large empty chest that stood in a corner of the room. He did so, for he knew that the poor farmer would be almost driven wild if he came in and saw a sexton standing unexpectedly before him. And the farmer's wife then made a bustle to hide all the wine and the dishes inside her baking-oven, for fear her husband, if he saw the table spread with them, should ask for whom she had been preparing such a grand entertainment.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" sighed Little Claus from his couch on the pent-house, when he saw the feast all put on one side.

"Anybody up there?" inquired the farmer, on hearing the voice; and he looked up and perceived Little Claus. "Why are you lying there? Come down into the house with me."

And Little Claus explained that he had lost his way, and asked the farmer if he would not give him shelter for the night.

"To be sure I will," replied the good-natured man. "Come in quickly, and let's have something to eat."

The woman received them both with a great show of welcome, covered one end of the long table, and brought out a large dish of oatmeal. The farmer set to with a capital appetite, but Little Claus could not eat for thinking of the good roast meat, the fish, the wine, and the delicious cake which he had seen stowed away inside the oven.

He put his sack containing the horse's skin under the table, and now, as he could not relish the oatmeal porridge, he began trampling the sack under his feet till the dry skin creaked aloud.

"Hush!" muttered Little Claus, as if speaking to his sack, but at the same moment he trod upon it again, so as to make it creak louder than before.

"What have you got in your sack?" asked the farmer.

"Oh! I've got a little conjuror there," replied Little Claus, "and he says we are not to be eating oatmeal porridge any longer, for he has conjured a feast of beef-steak, fried fish, and cake into the oven on purpose for us."

"A conjuror, did you say?" exclaimed the farmer; and up he got in a vast hurry to look into the oven and see whether the conjuror had spoken truly. And there, to be sure, were fish, and steak, and cake; the conjuror had been as good as his word.

The farmer's wife durst not utter a syllable of explanation. Almost as much bewildered as her husband, she set the viands on the table, and the farmer and his guest began with a hearty appetite to eat of the good cheer before them.

Presently Little Claus trampled on his sack again, and again made the skin creak.

"What does your conjuror say now?" asked the farmer.

"He says," replied Little Claus, "that he has also conjured three bottles of wine here for us; you will find them standing just in the corner of the oven." So the woman was now obliged to bring out the wine that she had concealed, and the farmer poured himself out a glass, and began to think it would be a fine thing to have such a capital conjuror as this.

"A right proper sort of conjuror this of yours!" observed he at last. "I should rather like to see him; will he let me, do you think?"

"Oh, of course," returned Little Claus; "my conjuror will do anything I ask him.—That you will, won't you?" asked he, again treading on his sack.—"Didn't you hear him say 'Yes'? But I warn you he will look somewhat dark and unpleasing; after all, it is scarcely worth while to see him!"

"Oh, I shall not be afraid. What will he look like?"

"Why, he will appear for all the world just like a sexton."

"A sexton!" repeated the farmer; "that is a pity! You must know that I cannot endure the sight of a sexton; but no matter, since I shall know that it is not a real sexton but only your conjuror, I shall not care about it. Oh, I've plenty of courage; only don't let him come too near me!"

"Well, I'll speak to my conjuror about it again," said Little Claus, and he trod on his skin till it went "creak, creak, creak," and bent his ear down as though to listen.

"What does he say now?"

"He says he will transport himself into yonder chest in the corner; you have only to lift up the lid, and there you will see him; but you must mind and shut the lid close down again."

"Will you help me to hold up the lid? It is very heavy," said the farmer; and he went up to the chest wherein his wife had concealed the real sexton, who sat with his limbs huddled up, trembling, and holding his breath, lest he should be discovered—certainly in no very comfortable state.

The farmer gently raised the lid of the chest and peeped under it. "Ugh!" cried he, and immediately started back in affright. "Oh dear! oh dear! I saw him; he looked exactly like our sexton in the town—oh, how horrible!"

However, he sat down at table again, and began to drink glass after glass of wine, by way of recovering from the shock. The wine soon revived his fallen courage. Neither he nor his guest ever thought of going to bed; there they sat, talking and feasting, till late in the night.

"Did you ever see your conjuror before?" inquired the farmer of Claus.

"Not I," replied Little Claus; "I should never have thought of asking him to show himself, if you had not proposed it. He knows he is not handsome—he does not

wish to obtrude himself into any company; he talks to me, and I to him, and isn't that enough?"

"Oh, indeed, it is!" rejoined the farmer quickly. Then after a minute's hesitation he went on, "Do you know, I should like very much to have your conjuror; would you mind selling him to me? Name your own price; I don't care if I give you a whole bushelful of silver on the spot."

"Oh, how can you ask such a thing?" exclaimed Little Claus. "Such a useful, such a faithful servant as he is to me, how could I think of parting with him? Why, he's worth his weight in gold ten times over."

"I can't offer you gold," replied the farmer, "but I should like so very much to have him! that is, provided he would never show his ugly self to me again."

"Oh, no fear of that," said Little Claus; "and really, since you have been so kind as to give me shelter to-night, I do not think I can refuse you any request. I will let you have my conjuror for a bushel of silver—only the bushel must be crammed full, you know."

"Certainly it shall," answered the farmer, "and the chest yonder too, you shall have that into the bargain; I don't want it to remain an hour longer in the house, it will always be reminding me of the hateful sexton-face I saw inside it."

So the bargain was struck, and Little Claus gave the farmer his sack, with the dry skin in it, and received instead a whole bushelful of silver. The farmer also gave him a large wheel-barrow wherewith to convey home his money and his chest.

"Farewell!" said Little Claus; and away he drove the wheel-barrow, the unfortunate sexton still lying concealed in the chest.

On the opposite side of the wood flowed a broad, deep river: the current was so strong that no one could swim against it; so a bridge had lately been built over it. Little Claus took his way over the bridge, but stopped short in the middle of it, saying very loud, on purpose

that the man in the chest might hear him, "Now, what on earth can be the use of this great tumble-down chest to me? It's as heavy, too, as if it were filled with stones; it quite tires me out. I'll fling it out into the river; if the stream chooses to float it homewards to me, well and good; if not, it may let it alone; all the same to me."

And he lifted the chest as though intending to throw it into the water.

"Oh, pray don't do that," cried the sexton in the chest; "let me out first, pray."

"Hollo!" exclaimed Little Claus; "is the chest bewitched? If so, the sooner it's off my hands the better."

"Oh, no, no, no," cried the sexton; "let me out, and I'll give you another whole bushelful of money."

"Ah, that's quite another matter," said Little Claus; and he immediately set down the chest, and lifted the lid. Out crept the sexton, greatly to his own satisfaction. He kicked the empty chest into the water, and then took Little Claus to his house with him, where he gave him the bushelful of money, as agreed. Little Claus had now a wheel-barrow full of money.

"Certainly, I must own I have been well paid for my horse's skin," said he to himself, as he entered his own little room, and overturned all his money in a great heap on the floor. "It will vex Great Claus, I'm afraid, when he finds out how rich my horse's skin has made me."

And now he sent a little boy to Great Claus to borrow a measure of him.

"What can he want with a measure, I wonder?" thought Great Claus, and he cunningly smeared the bottom of the measure with clay, hoping that some part of whatever was measured might cleave to the clay. And accordingly, when the measure was returned to him, he discovered three silver coins sticking at the bottom. "Fine doings, upon my word," exclaimed Great Claus in amazement; and off he set forthwith to the house of his

namesake. "Where did you get all that money?" thundered he.

"Oh, I got it by my horse's skin, which I sold yesterday," was the reply.

"Really?" exclaimed Great Claus. "What! are horses' skins so dear as that? Who would have thought it?" And he ran quickly home, took an axe, and struck all his four horses on the head with it, then flayed off the skins, and drove into the town. "Skins, skins, who will buy skins?" cried he, as he passed through the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners in the town came running up to him, and asked his price.

"I will have a bushelful of money for each," replied Great Claus.

"Are you mad?" cried they. "Do you think we reckon our money by bushels?"

"Skins, fresh skins, who will buy skins?" shouted he again; and still to all who asked how much he wanted for them, he replied, "A bushelful of money."

"The rude boor! he is trying to make fools of us," declared one of his customers at last in very great wrath.

"Skins, fresh skins, fine fresh skins," cried they all, mimicking him. "Out of the town with him, the great ass! or he shall have no skin left on his own shoulders." And Great Claus was ignominiously thrust out of the town, and returned home in no very good humour.

"Little Claus shall pay for this," muttered he. "Sleep soundly this night, Little Claus, for thou shalt hardly wake again."

It so chanced that Little Claus's grandmother died that same evening. She had always been very cross and ill-natured to him in her lifetime, but now, on finding her dead, he felt really sorry for her. He laid the dead woman in his own warm bed in hopes that the warmth might bring her to life again; for his own part, he thought he could spend the night in a chair in a corner of the room; he had often done so before.

About midnight the door opened, and Great Claus, his

axe in his hand, came in. He knew well where Little Claus's bed was wont to stand ; he went straight up to it, and struck the dead grandmother a violent blow on the forehead.

"There's for you," cried he ; "now you'll never make a fool of me again," and herewith he went out of the room and returned home.

"What a very wicked man he is," sighed Little Claus. "So he wanted to kill me ; it was a good thing that old grandmother was dead already, or that blow would have hurt her very much."

The next day, in the evening, he met Great Claus in a lane near the village. Great Claus started back and stared at him. "What ! aren't you dead ? I thought I killed you last night !"

"Yes, you wicked man," replied Little Claus ; "I know you came into my room intending to kill me, but my grandmother, not I, was lying in bed ; it was she that you struck with your pick-axe, and you deserve to be hanged for it."

"And are you going to tell people about it ?" said Great Claus. "That you never shall !" He was carrying a very large sack, and he seized Little Claus by the waist and thrust him into the sack, crying out, "I will drown thee at once, and that will be the end of thy tale-telling."

But he had a long way to walk before he reached the river, and Little Claus was by no means a light burden. The road led past the church ; the organ was playing, for the service had just begun. Among the congregation Great Claus saw a man he wanted to speak to.

"Little Claus cannot get out of the sack by himself," thought he, "and no one can help him, for all the people are in church. I can just go in and call that man back into the porch for a minute." So he set down the heavy sack and ran into church.

"Oh dear ! oh dear !" sighed Little Claus inside the sack. He turned and twisted in vain, but it was not possible for him to get the string loose. Just then a very,

very old cattle driver passed by, his hair white as snow, and with a stout staff in his hand ; he was driving a large herd of cows and bullocks before him, many more than he, feeble as he was, could manage. One of them rushed up against the sack, and turned it over and over. "Oh, help me, pray !" cried Little Claus, "I am so young to die ; help me out of the sack."

"What ! is there a man in the sack ?" and the ancient cattle driver bent down, though with some difficulty, and untied the string. "The bullock has not hurt you, I hope ?" But Little Claus sprang out so briskly as showed he was not hurt, and set himself immediately to rooting up the withered stump of a tree which stood by the roadside, and which he rolled into the sack, and then, tying the string, he placed the sack exactly as Great Claus had left it. The cattle had, meantime, passed on.

"Will you not drive these cattle home to the village for me ?" asked the old man. "I am so weary, and I want to go into church so much."

"Right gladly will I help you since you have helped me," replied Little Claus ; and he took the cattle driver's goad from his hand, and followed the herd in his stead.

Presently Great Claus came running back again. He took up the sack, and again flung it across his shoulders, thinking, "How much lighter the burden seems now ; it always does one good to rest for ever so short a time."

So on he trudged to the river, flung the sack out into the water, and shouted after it, "There now, Little Claus, you shall never cheat me any more !" He then turned homewards, but on passing a spot where several roads crossed, whom should he meet but Little Claus himself with his herd of cattle.

"How comes this ?" exclaimed Great Claus. "Is it really you ? Did not I drown you then, after all ?"

"I believe you meant to drown me," said Little Claus ; "you threw me into the river just half an hour ago, did you not ?"

"But how did you come by all these beautiful cattle?" asked Great Claus, in utter amazement, his eyes wandering admiringly from one to another of the herd.

"These are sea-cattle," said Little Claus. "Ah, I'll tell you the whole story! I am really much obliged to you for drowning me; it has made me richer than ever, as you may see. I was so frightened when I lay in the sack, and the wind whistled so uncomfortably into my ears when you threw me down from the bridge into the cold water!

"I sank to the bottom at once, but I was not hurt, for I was received by the softest, freshest grass. Immediately the sack was opened, and the most beautiful young girl you can imagine, clad in snow-white robes, and with a green wreath in her wet hair, took me by the hand, saying, 'Art thou Little Claus? Here are some cattle of thine, and a mile farther up the road, another and larger herd is grazing, and I will give thee that herd also!'

"And then I understood that the river was a sort of high-road for the people of the sea, and that on it they walked and drove to and fro from the sea far up into the land where the river rises, and thence back to the sea again. And no place can be more beautiful than it is at the bottom of the water; the prettiest flowers and the freshest grass grow there, and the fishes swimming in the water slipped about my ears just as birds flutter about us up here in the air. And such gaily-dressed people I saw there, and such a multitude of cattle grazing in pastures inclosed with hedges and ditches."

"Then why were you in such a hurry to come up again?" inquired Great Claus. "I shouldn't have done so, not I, when I found it so pleasant there."

"Ah," rejoined little Claus; "that was so cleverly done on my part! Did not I tell you that the sea-lady told me that a mile up the road—and by the road she could only mean the river, she can't come into our land roads—there was another and larger herd of cattle for me? But I knew that the river makes a great many

turns and windings, and therefore I thought I'd just spare myself half a mile of the way by taking the short cut across ~~the~~ land. So here I am, you see, and I shall soon get to my sea-cattle!"

"Oh, what a lucky fellow you are!" exclaimed Great Claus. "Don't you think that I might have some cattle given to me, too, if I went down to the bottom of the river?"

"How can I tell?" asked Little Claus, in reply.

"You envious scoundrel! you want to keep all the beautiful sea-cattle for yourself, I warrant!" cried Great Claus. "Either you will carry me to the water's edge, and throw me over, or I will take out my great knife and kill you! Make your choice!"

"Oh no, please don't be so angry!" entreated Little Claus. "I cannot carry you in the sack to the river; you are too heavy for me. But if you will walk there yourself, and then creep into the sack, I will throw you over with all the pleasure in the world!"

"But if, when I get to the bottom, I find no sea-cattle for me, I shall kill you all the same when I come back, remember that!" said Great Claus; and to this arrangement Little Claus made no objection.

They walked together to the river. As soon as the thirsty cattle saw the water, they ran on as fast as they could, eagerly crowding against each other, and all wanting to drink first.

"Only look at my sea-cattle!" said Little Claus; "see how they are longing to be at the bottom of the river."

"That's all very well," said Great Claus, "but you must help me first." And he quickly crept into the great sack which had lain stretched across the shoulders of one of the oxen. "Put a heavy stone in with me," said Great Claus, "else, perhaps, I shall not sink to the bottom."

"No fear of that!" replied Little Claus. However, he put a large stone into the sack, tied the strings,

and pushed the sack into the water—plump! There it fell, straight to the bottom.

“I am much afraid he will not find his sea-cattle!” observed Little Claus; and he drove his own herd quietly home to the village.

THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER.

THERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers, all brothers, for they had all been made out of one old tin spoon. They carried muskets in their arms, and held themselves very upright, and their uniforms were red and blue—very gay, indeed.

The first word they heard in this world, when the lid was taken off the box in which they lay, was “Tin soldiers!” It was a little boy who made this exclamation, clapping his hands at the same time. They had been given to him because it was his birthday, and he now set them out on the table.

The soldiers resembled each other to a hair—one only was rather different from the rest; he had but one leg, for he had been made last, when there was not quite tin enough left. However, he stood as firmly upon his one leg as the others did upon their two; and this identical tin soldier it is whose fortunes seem to us worthy of record.

On the table where the tin soldiers were set out were several other playthings, but the most charming of them all was a pretty pasteboard castle. Through its little windows one could look into the rooms. In front of the castle stood some tiny trees, clustering round a little mirror intended to represent a lake, and waxen swans swam in the lake and were reflected on its surface.

All this was very pretty, but prettiest of all was a little damsel standing in the open doorway of the castle; she, too, was cut out of pasteboard, but she had on a frock of the clearest muslin, a little sky-blue ribbon

was flung across her shoulders like a scarf, and in the midst of this scarf was set a bright gold wing. The little lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer, and raised one of her legs so high in the air that the tin soldier could not find it, and fancied that she had, like him, only one leg.

"That would be just the wife for me," thought he, "but then, she is of rather too high rank; she lives in a castle. I have only a box; and besides, there are all our five-and-twenty men in it; it is no place for her!

"However, there will be no harm in my making acquaintance with her," and so he stationed himself behind a snuff-box that stood on the table; from this place he had a full view of the delicate little lady, who still remained standing on one leg, yet without losing her balance.

When evening came, all the other tin soldiers were put away into the box, and the people of the house went to bed. The playthings now began to play in their turn; they pretended to visit, to fight battles, and give balls. The tin soldiers rattled in the box, for they wanted to play too, but the lid would not come off. The nut-crackers cut capers, and the slate-pencil played at commerce on the slate; there was such a racket that the canary-bird woke up, and began to talk too, but he always talked in verse.

The only two who did not move from their places were the tin soldier and the little dancer; she constantly remained in her graceful position, standing on the point of her foot, with outstretched arms; and, as for him, he stood just as firmly on his one leg, never for one moment turning his eyes away from her.

Twelve o'clock struck. Crash! Open sprang the lid of the snuff-box, but there was no snuff inside it; no; out jumped a little black conjuror, in fact it was a Jack-in-the-box. "Tin soldier!" said the conjuror, "wilt thou keep thine eyes to thyself?"

But the tin soldier pretended not to hear.

"Well, only wait till to-morrow!" quoth the conjuror.

When the morrow had come, and the children were out of bed, the tin soldier was placed on the window-ledge, and, whether the conjuror or the wind occasioned it, all at once the window flew open, and out fell the tin soldier, head foremost, from the third story to the ground.

A dreadful fall was that! His one leg turned over and over in the air, and at last he rested, poised on his soldier's cap, with his bayonet between the paving-stones.

The maid-servant and the little boy immediately came down to look for him; but, although they very nearly trod on him, they could not see him. If the tin soldier had but called out, "Here I am!" they might easily have found him; but he thought it would not be becoming for him to cry out, as he was in uniform.

It now began to rain; every drop fell heavier than the last; there was a regular shower. When it was over, two boys came by. "Look!" said one, "here is a tin soldier; he shall have a sail for once in his life."

So they made a boat out of an old newspaper, put the tin soldier into it, and away he sailed down the gutter, both the boys running along by the side and clapping their hands. The paper boat rocked to and fro, and every now and then veered round so quickly that the tin soldier became quite giddy; still he moved not a muscle, looked straight before him, and held his bayonet tightly clasped.

All at once the boat sailed under a long gutter-board; he found it as dark here as at home in his own box.

"Where shall I get to next?" thought he. "Yes, to be sure, it is all that conjuror's doing! Ah, if the little maiden were but sailing with me in the boat I would not care for its being twice as dark!"

Just then a great water-rat that lived under the gutter-board darted out.

"Have you a passport?" asked the rat. "Where is your passport?"

But the tin soldier was silent, and held his weapon

with a still firmer grasp. The boat sailed on, and the rat followed. Oh! how furiously he showed his teeth, and cried out to sticks and straws, "Stop him, stop him! he has not paid the toll; he has not shown his passport!"

But the stream grew stronger and stronger. The tin soldier could already catch a glimpse of the bright daylight before the boat came from under the tunnel, but at the same time he heard a roaring noise, at which the boldest heart might well have trembled. Only fancy! where the tunnel ended, the water of the gutter fell perpendicularly into a great canal; this was as dangerous for the tin soldier as sailing down a mighty waterfall would be for us.

He was now so close that he could no longer stand upright; the boat darted forwards; the poor tin soldier held himself as stiff and immovable as possible; no one could accuse him of having even blinked. The boat spun round and round three, nay, four times, and was filled with water to the brim; it must sink. The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water; deeper and deeper sank the boat, softer and softer grew the paper. The water went over the soldier's head, and he thought of the pretty little dancer whom he should never see again, and these words rang in his ears:—

"Wild adventure, mortal danger
Be thy portion, valiant stranger!"

The paper now tore asunder, the tin soldier fell through the rent; but, in the same moment, he was swallowed up by a large fish. Oh, how dark it was, worse even than under the gutter-board, and so narrow, too! But the tin soldier's resolution was as constant as ever; there he lay, at full length, shouldering his arms.

The fish turned and twisted about, and made the strangest movements. At last he became quite still; a flash of lightning, as it were, darted through him. The daylight shone brightly, and some one exclaimed, "Tin

soldier!" The fish had been caught, taken to the market, sold, and brought home into the kitchen, where the servant-girl was cutting him up with a large knife.

She seized the tin soldier by the middle with two of her fingers, and took him into the parlour, where every one was eager to see the wonderful man who had travelled in the maw of a fish; however, our little warrior was by no means proud. They set him on the table, and there—no, how could anything so extraordinary happen in this world?—the tin soldier was in the very same room in which he had been before.

He saw the same children, the same playthings stood on the table, among them the beautiful castle with the pretty little dancing maiden, who was still standing upon one leg, while she held the other high in the air; she, too, was constant. It quite affected the tin soldier; he could have found it in his heart to weep tin tears, but such weakness would have been unbecoming in a soldier. He looked at her and she looked at him, but neither spoke a word.

And now one of the little boys took the soldier and threw him without ceremony into the stove. He did not give any reason for so doing, but, no doubt, the conjuror in the snuff-box must have had a hand in it.

The tin soldier now stood in a blaze of red light; he felt extremely hot. Whether this heat was the result of the actual fire or of the flames of love within him, he knew not. He had entirely lost his colour. Whether this change had happened during his travels, or were the effect of strong emotion, I know not. He looked upon the little damsel, she looked upon him, and he felt that he was melting; but, constant as ever, he still stood shouldering his arms.

A door opened, the wind seized the dancer, and, like a sylph, she flew straightway into the stove to the tin soldier; they both flamed up into a blaze, and were gone. The soldier was melted to a hard lump, and

when the maid took out the ashes the next day she found his remains in the shape of a little tin heart; of the dancer there remained only the gold wing, and that was burned black as coal.

THE NAUGHTY BOY.

THERE was once an old poet, such a good, honest old poet! He was sitting alone in his own little room on a very stormy evening; the wind was roaring without, and the rain poured down in torrents. But the old man sat cosy by his warm stove, the fire was blazing brightly, and some apples were roasting in front of it.

“Those poor people who have no roof to shelter them to-night will, most assuredly, not have a dry thread left on their skin,” said the kind-hearted old man.

“Oh, open the door! open the door! I am so cold, and quite wet through besides—open the door!” cried a voice from without. The voice was like a child’s, and seemed half choked with sobs. “Rap, rap, rap!” it went on, knocking at the door, while the rain still kept streaming down from the clouds, and the wind rattled among the window-panes.

“Poor thing!” said the old poet; and he arose and opened the door. There stood a little boy, almost naked; the water trickled down from his long flaxen hair; he was shivering with cold, and had he been left much longer out in the street, he must certainly have perished in the storm.

“Poor boy!” said the old poet again, taking him by the hand, and leading him into his room. “Come to me, and we’ll soon make thee warm again, and I will give thee some wine, and some roasted apples for thy supper, my pretty child!”

And, of a truth, the boy was exceedingly pretty. His eyes shone as bright as stars, and his hair, although

dripping with water, curled in beautiful ringlets. He looked quite like a little cherub, but he was very pale, and trembled in every limb with cold. In his hand he held a pretty little cross-bow, but it seemed entirely spoiled by the rain, and the colours painted on the arrows all ran one into another.

The old poet sat down again beside the stove, and took the little boy in his lap; he wrung the water out of his streaming hair, warmed the child's hands within his own, and gave him mulled wine to drink. The boy soon became himself again, the rosy colour returned to his cheeks, he jumped down from the old man's lap, and danced around him on the floor.

"Thou art a merry fellow!" said the poet. "Thou must tell me thy name."

"They call me Cupid," replied the boy. "Don't you know me? There lies my bow; ah, you can't think how capitally I can shoot! See, the weather is fine again now; the moon is shining bright."

"But thy bow is spoiled," said the old man.

"That would be a sad disaster, indeed," remarked the boy, as he took the bow in his hand and examined it closely. "Oh, it is quite dry by this time, and it is not a bit damaged; the string, too, is quite strong enough, I think. However, I may as well try it!"

He then drew his bow, placed an arrow before the string, took his aim, and shot direct into the old poet's heart. "Now you may be sure that my cross-bow is not spoiled!" cried he, as, with a loud laugh, he ran away.

The naughty boy! This was, indeed, ungrateful of him, to shoot to the heart the good old man, who had so kindly taken him in, warmed him, and dried his clothes, given him sweet wine, and nice roasted apples for supper!

The poor poet lay groaning on the ground, for the arrow had wounded him sore. "Fie, for shame, Cupid!" cried he, "thou art a wicked boy! I will tell all good children

how thou hast treated me, and bid them take heed and never play with thee, for thou wilt assuredly do them a mischief, as thou hast done to me."

All the good boys and girls to whom he related this story were on their guard against the wicked boy, Cupid; but, notwithstanding, he made fools of them again and again, he is so terribly cunning!

When the students are returning home from lecture, he walks by their side, dressed in a black gown, and with a book under his arm. They take him to be a fellow-student, and so they suffer him to walk arm-in-arm with them, just as if he were one of their intimate friends. But whilst they are thus familiar with him, all of a sudden he thrusts his arrows into their bosoms.

Even when young girls are going to church, he will follow and watch for his opportunity: he is always way-laying people. In the theatre, he sits in the great chandelier, and kindles such a bright, hot flame, men fancy it a lamp; but they are soon undeceived. He wanders about in the royal gardens and all the public walks, making mischief everywhere; nay, once he even shot thy father and mother to the heart! Only ask them, dear child, and they will certainly tell thee all about it.

In fine, this fellow, this Cupid, is a very wicked boy! Do not play with him! He waylays everybody, boys and girls, youths and maidens, men and women, rich and poor, old and young. Only think of this: he once shot an arrow into thy good old grandmother's heart! It happened a long time ago, and she has recovered from the wound, but she will never forget him, depend upon it.

Fie, for shame! wicked Cupid! Is he not a mischievous boy?

Beware of him, beware of him, dear child!

THE ANGEL.

"WHENEVER a good child dies, an Angel of God comes down to earth, takes the dead child in his arms, and, spreading out his large white wings, flies with him over all the places that were dear to him.

"And the Angel gathers a handful of flowers, and takes them to the good God, that they may bloom yet more beautiful in heaven than they did upon earth. And the flower which most pleases its Creator receives a voice, and, supremely happy, joins in the chorus of the blessed angels."

Thus spoke an Angel of God while carrying a dead child to heaven; and the child listened as though in a dream, and together they flew over all those places where the child had formerly played, and they passed over gardens full of lovely flowers.

"Which flower shall we take with us and plant in heaven?" asked the Angel.

And there stood a fair delicate rose-tree, but an evil hand had broken the stem, so that all the branches, with their large, half-opened buds, hung faded down to the ground. "Poor tree!" said the child, "let us take it, that it may bloom again with the good God in heaven."

And the Angel took it, and kissed the child, and the little one half-opened his eyes. They plucked many a splendid garden flower, but they also took the meek little daisy and the wild heart's-ease.

"Now we have flowers enough!" said the child; and the Angel seemed to assent, but he did not yet fly up to heaven.

It was night; it was very still: they stayed near a town; they hovered over one of its narrowest streets, where straw, ashes, and rubbish of all kinds were scattered. There had been a removal that day; lying on the ground were broken plates, bits of plaster, rags,

fragments of old hats ; in short, nothing but things unseemly.

Amidst this confusion the Angel pointed to the broken pieces of an old flower-pot, and a lump of earth fallen out of it ; they were only held together by the roots of a large, faded field-flower, which was no longer worth looking at, and had, therefore, been thrown out into the street.

"We will take this flower with us," said the Angel. "I will tell thee about it as we are flying."

And they flew away, and the Angel spake as follows :—

"There once lived in a low cellar, down in that little narrow street, a poor, sick boy. He had been confined to his bed from his earliest years ; perhaps, now and then, he was able to take a few turns up and down his little room on his crutches, but that was all he could do.

"Sometimes, during the summer, the sunbeams would stream through his little cellar-window, and then, if the child sat up and felt the warm sun shining upon him, and could see the crimson blood in his slight, wasted, transparent fingers, as he held them up to the light, he would say, 'To-day I have been out !'

"He only knew the pleasant woods and their bright vernal green by the neighbour's son bringing him the first fresh boughs of the beech-tree, which he would hold over his head, and then fancy he was under the shade of the beech-trees, with the birds warbling, and the sun shining around him.

"One day in spring the neighbour's son brought him some field-flowers, and among them was one with a root ; so it was put into a flower-pot and placed at the window, close by the bed, and, being carefully planted, it flourished, and put forth fresh shoots, and bore flowers every year. It was like a beautiful garden to the poor boy—his little treasure upon earth ; he watered it, and tended it, taking care that every sunbeam, from the first to the last, which penetrated his little low window, should fall upon the plant. And its flowers, with their soft colours and fragrance, mingled with his dreams ; and towards them

he turned when he was dying, when Our Lord called him to Himself.

"The child has now been a year with the blessed; for a year the plant has stood by the window, faded and forgotten, and to-day it was thrown out among the rubbish into the street. And this is the flower which we have just now taken; for this poor faded field-flower has given more pleasure than the most splendid blossoms in the garden of a queen."

"But how do you know all this?" asked the child, whom the Angel was bearing to heaven.

"How do I know it!" said the Angel. "I was myself that little sick boy who went upon crutches. Ought I not to know my own flower?"

And the child opened wide its eyes, and looked into the Angel's fair, bright countenance—and in the same moment they were in heaven.

And the dead child received wings like the Angel's, and flew with him hand in hand. And a voice was given to the poor faded field-flower, and it sang with the Angels surrounding the great God, some very near Him, and others forming larger circles farther and farther away, extending into infinity, but all equally blessed.

And they all sang together—the Angels, the good child, and the poor faded field-flower, which had lain among the rubbish of that dark and narrow street.

THE CLOGS OF FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

A BEGINNING.

EVERY author has something peculiar in his style of writing, and those who are unfriendly to him quickly fasten upon this peculiarity, shrug up their shoulders, and exclaim, "There he is again!" Now, I well know

how to provoke this exclamation. I have only to begin my story as I had intended, thus :—

“Rome has its Corso, Naples its Toledo”—“Ah, there’s that Andersen again!” say they; however, it matters not, I shall continue. “Copenhagen has its East Street”—well, we will leave it so.

In one of the houses near the New Market a party was assembled. A great number of people had been invited, probably only for the sake of receiving invitations in return. About half the guests were seated at card-tables, the rest patiently awaited the result of a challenge to conversation just given by the hostess. “Come, let us see how we can amuse ourselves!”

Amongst other subjects the Middle Ages was started, and some persons present asserted that this period was far more interesting than our own times; Councillor Knap defending this opinion with so much zeal that the lady of the house immediately came over to his side. And then they both declaimed eagerly against Oersted’s treatise on “Old Times and New Times,” in which the preference is given to the latter; the Councillor declaring the times of King Hans—the close of the fifteenth century—to be decidedly the best and happiest.

Leaving this discussion, which was only interrupted for a moment by the arrival of a newspaper containing nothing worth the trouble of reading, we will now quit the guest-chamber, and betake ourselves to the anteroom, where cloaks, sticks, and clogs are left.

Here are sitting two females, the one young, the other old; and at first sight we might imagine them to be maid-servants come to accompany their ladies home; but, on a nearer view, it is seen that their figures are noble, their hands and complexion delicate, their bearing majestic and queenly; in fact, they are fairies.

The younger is certainly not Dame Fortune herself, but she is the handmaid of one of her ladies of the bedchamber, and allowed to distribute her lesser gifts; the other, who looks somewhat gloomy, is Care, one

who always attends to her affairs personally, because she is then sure no mistakes will happen.

They were telling each other where they had been that day. The handmaid of Fortune had as yet only related a few insignificant actions, such as having saved a new hat from a shower of rain, or having procured for an honest, plain man a greeting from some distinguished nobody, etc., etc. She had, however, reserved for her last communication one of a most unusual nature.

"I have also to tell you," said she, "that this is my birthday, in honour of which there has been intrusted to me a pair of clogs which I am to have the privilege of bestowing upon mortals. These clogs have the power of instantly transporting every one who puts them on to the place where he desires to be ; his every wish with regard to time, place, or circumstance will at once be fulfilled, and the favoured mortal thus rendered completely happy."

"Mark me !" said Care. "He will, on the contrary, be very unhappy, and will bless the moment which frees him from thy clogs."

"That is your opinion !" returned the other. "Nevertheless, I now place them by the door ; presently some one will put them on, and become the fortunate man."

Such was their dialogue.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT BEFELL THE COUNCILLOR.

It grew late. Councillor Knap, still deep in the times of King Hans, was about to return home, and, as fate would have it, he got hold of the Clogs of Fortune instead of his own, and, putting them on, stepped out into East Street. But the magic power of the clogs having, according to his wish, carried him back to the fifteenth century, his feet sank into a mass of filth and mud—the streets of that period not having the advantage of a stone pavement.

"How disgustingly dirty it is here!" said the Councillor. "Why, the footpath is gone, and all the lamps are out!"

The moon had not yet risen high enough to give much light, besides which the atmosphere was rather thick, so that every object around him was enveloped in mist and seemed indistinct. One solitary lamp burned before an image of the Virgin in a corner of the street; its light, however, was but faint, and, in fact, the Councillor did not remark it till he stood just underneath, and then his eyes fell upon the painted figure.

"That must be some exhibition," thought he, "and they have forgotten to take in the sign."

Two men in the costume of the Middle Ages passed by him.

"How odd those people look! I suppose they are coming from a masquerade."

Suddenly was heard the noise of drums and fifes, torches flashed brightly, the Councillor started at seeing a most unusual procession pass by. First came a whole troop of drummers, who handled their instruments very cleverly, and then followed yeomen with bows and arrows. The chief person amid the throng was a priest in very solemn garb. Greatly astonished, the Councillor asked what all this meant, and who the priest was.

"That is the Bishop of Zealand," was the reply.

"What, in the name of common-sense, can have possessed the Bishop?" said the Councillor; and he sighed and shook his head. "It could not possibly be the Bishop."

Still ruminating on this subject, he walked on through East Street and over Bridge Place, without looking either to the right or to the left. The bridge leading to Palace Square was not to be found; instead of it he approached the edge of the water, and at last came up to two men seated in a boat.

"May we ferry your honour over to Holm?" asked they.

"Over to Holm!" repeated the Councillor, who was by no means aware of having been transported into the happy period he so much admired. "I want to go to Christianshaven, and thence to Little Market Street."

The men looked at him without answering.

"Only tell me where the bridge is!" said he. "It is shameful that the lamps are not lighted; and it is so dirty that one might as well walk through a bog."

The longer he talked to the boatmen the less he could understand them. At last he exclaimed, "I cannot make out your Bornholmish dialect!" and, very much provoked, he turned his back upon them. The bridge was not to be found, neither were there any railings.

"It is scandalous how things are suffered to go on here!" cried he. Never had he found so much cause to complain of the times as on this evening. "I think I had better take a coach."

Thus he determined; but what had become of the coaches? Not one was to be seen. "I must go back to the New Market; there are always coaches there, and without one I shall never find my way to Christianshaven."

So back he went through East Street, and had almost reached the end of it when the moon burst forth from behind the clouds. "What can that scaffolding be up there?" cried he, on seeing the East Gate, which stood formerly at the end of East Street.

He found an outlet, and through it he went in the expectation of arriving at the New Market, when lo! he beheld a vast green plain. A few bushes grew here and there, and right through the middle flowed a broad canal or river, one could not say which. A few miserable wooden hovels, inhabited by the Dutch skippers, which caused the place to be called Dutch Meadow, stood on the opposite shore.

"Either I see a *fata morgana*, or else I have lost my wits," grumbled the Councillor, quite in consternation. "What can be the matter? What can be the matter?"

He turned back with the settled conviction that he

was ill. On re-entering the street he looked more closely at the houses, and perceived that they were mostly built of wood, and that many had only thatched roofs.

"No, it must be that I am very unwell," sighed he, "and yet I did but drink one glass of punch; however, it seems that was one too many. It was so absurd of them to give us punch and hot salmon! I shall take the liberty of telling my lady hostess so. I have a great mind to turn back now and let her know how ill I feel; but no, that would seem so ridiculous; besides, it is a question whether every one is not gone to bed."

He looked for the house, but it was not to be found.

"It is horrible! I do not even know East Street. Why, there are no shops to be seen, I can see nothing but old, wretched, tumble-down houses, just as if I were at Roeskilde or Ringsted. Alas, I must be very ill! it is of no use to deceive myself. But where in the world is the agent's house gone to? This is not it, surely! However, I see there are some persons up still. Ah, I am, indeed, very ill!"

He pushed against a half-open door whence the light came. It was a tavern of those times, a sort of beer-house; the room looked not unlike one of the old-fashioned clay-floored halls of Holstein. A number of people—seamen, citizens of Copenhagen, and a few students—sat within in deep converse, and took little heed of the new comer.

"Pardon my intrusion," said the Councillor to the landlady, who advanced to meet him; "I have just been taken ill! Will you be so kind as to send for a coach to convey me to Christianshaven?"

The woman stared and shook her head. She then addressed him in German, upon which the Councillor, presuming that she did not understand Danish, expressed his wish in German. This, together with his dress, confirmed the woman in her idea that he was a foreigner; one thing, at all events, she comprehended that he was ill. So she brought him a pitcher of water; it had

somewhat of a brackish taste, although just drawn from the well. The Councillor supported his head on his hand, drew a deep breath, and grumbled to himself about the strange things he saw around him.

"Is that the *News* of this evening?" asked he, on seeing the woman remove a large sheet of paper.

She did not understand his meaning; however, she gave him the paper, which proved to be a coarse wood-engraving representing a meteor which had been seen not long ago in the town of Cologne.

"This is very ancient!" exclaimed the Councillor, much excited by the sight of such a choice relic. "How did you come by this rare print? It is highly interesting, although the subject is fabulous. These meteors are now explained to be the reflections of the northern lights; they are probably occasioned by electricity."

Those who sat near him and heard his speech looked on him with astonishment, and one of them rose respectfully from his seat, took off his hat, and said, with a face of wondrous gravity, "You must be a very learned man, monsieur!"

"Oh, no, indeed!" returned the Councillor. "I can but take my part in conversation when it turns upon subjects which everybody understands."

"*Modestia* is a fine virtue!" said the man, "otherwise I would say, *Mihi secus videtur*; however, for the present, I suspend my *judicium*."

"May I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?" inquired the Councillor.

"I am *Baccalaureus Scripturæ Sacræ*," replied the man.

This answer satisfied the Councillor, the name corresponded with the dress. "He must be some old-fashioned country schoolmaster," he thought; "an original, such as one meets with sometimes in Jutland."

"This is of a truth no *locus docendi*," resumed the stranger, "yet, I pray you, disdain not to converse with me! You are, doubtless, well read in the works of the ancients?"

"Oh yes!" answered the Councillor; "I am fond of reading all ancient writings that are profitable; and, indeed, I like modern books pretty well, excepting those *Tales of Everyday Life* of which, I think, we have enough in reality."

"*'Tales of Everyday Life'*?" repeated our Bacca-laureus.

"Oh, I mean those new novels of which people talk so much."

"As to that," said the man, with a smile, "they certainly contain a great deal of wit, and are read at court. The King particularly likes the romance of Sir Iwain and Sir Gawain, which, you know, treats of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table; he and his great lords once jested merrily over it."*

"It is strange that I have never read it!" said the Councillor.

"It must be one of Heiberg's newest."

"No," said the man, "it is not published by Heiberg, but by Godfrey von Gehmen."

"Is he the author?" cried the Councillor. "That is a very old name! Was he not the first man who printed books in Denmark?"

"Yes, he is certainly our first printer," returned the stranger.

So far, so good. And now one of the honest burghers began to speak of the severe pestilence which had raged a few years before, meaning that of 1484. The Councillor thought they were talking of the cholera; so that also passed off well enough.

The era of the war of the Pirates (1490) was so near that it was naturally alluded to. The English pirates, they said, had taken their ships on their very shores;

* Holberg relates in his "History of the Kingdom of Denmark" that King Hans, after reading the romance of King Arthur, said, laughingly, to his favourite, Otto Rud, "Sir Iwain and Sir Gawain, of whom I read in this book, were indeed gallant knights; such knights are not to be found now!" Whereupon Otto Rud replied, "If there were still warriors such as King Arthur, there would also be found many such knights as Sir Iwain and Sir Gawain."

and the Councillor, who had lived through the events of 1801, joined with them heart and soul in abusing the English.

But after this, conversation did not go on smoothly; every moment it became more and more discordant. The honest Baccalaureus was so ignorant that the simplest, most matter-of-fact assertions of the Councillor sounded to him far too positive and fantastic. They looked at each other quite angrily. Baccalaureus at last spoke Latin, in the hope of being better understood, but it was all of no use.

"How are you now?" asked the hostess, pulling the Councillor by the sleeve. In the heat of debate he had entirely forgotten all that had happened, but he now recollected himself.

"Where am I?" said he, his head feeling dizzy again.

"We will have claret, mead, and Bremer-beer!" cried one of the guests, "and you shall drink with us!"

Two girls came in; one of them wore a parti-coloured hood. They poured out the liquor, and bowed to the company. The Councillor shivered from head to foot.

"What is all this? What is all this?" cried he, but he was obliged to drink with them; they quite overpowered the good man; he was in despair; and when one of them said he was drunk, he never for a moment doubted the fact. He begged them to fetch a coach, and then they thought he was speaking Muscovitish. Never had he been before in such low company.

"One might suppose the country had become heathen again," thought he; "this is the most horrible hour of my life!"

The idea occurred to him to stoop under the table and creep out of the room; he did so, but before he had reached the door, the others, perceiving his intention, seized hold of his feet. By good luck the clogs fell off, and with them the whole scene of enchantment vanished. The Councillor saw a lamp burning brightly before

him, and behind the lamp, a large house. Every object was familiar to him; he was once more in East Street, such as we know it; he was lying on the pavement, his legs kicking against the door of a house, and exactly opposite sat the watchman enjoying a sound sleep.

"To think that I have lain here dreaming in the street!" said he. "Yes, to be sure, this is East Street, so gay and handsome, and so well lighted! It is terrible that one glass of punch should have had such an effect upon me."

Two minutes afterwards he was comfortably seated in a coach, which soon brought him to Christianshaven. He remembered all the trouble he had experienced, and prized the more that happy reality—our own time, which, with all its faults, he now found so much pleasanter than the period of which he had lately made trial.

CHAPTER III.

THE WATCHMAN'S ADVENTURES.

"THERE'S a pair of clogs!" said the watchman; "they must belong to the lieutenant who lodges up there; they lie just by the door."

The honest man would have rung the bell and restored them to their supposed owner, for there were still lights burning in the lieutenant's room, but he was afraid of disturbing the slumbers of the other people in the house.

"It must be right warm and comfortable to have such things on one's feet!" said he; "they are made of such soft leather." He slipped his feet into them.

"How strangely everything goes on in this world! That lieutenant might now, if he chose, get into his own warm bed, but only see, he does no such thing; there he walks up and down on the floor! He is a happy man; he has neither mother nor children to provide for, and he goes to parties every evening. Oh, if I were he, I should indeed be a happy man!"

No sooner said than done. The clogs had their effect ; the soul of the watchman passed into the lieutenant's. There he stood in his chamber holding between his finger and thumb a tiny sheet of rose-coloured note-paper, on which a poem was written—a poem composed by the lieutenant's own accomplished self. For where is the man who at some time or another of his life has not had lyrical moments? And if he then write down his thoughts, behold! there is poetry. Here is the lieutenant's poem :—

WOULD I WERE RICH.

“ ‘Would I were rich!’ when but a thoughtless child
I oft exclaimed, among my playmates wild;
‘Would I were rich! an officer I’d be,
With sword and feather’d plume so gay to see!’
And time passed on; one wish was granted me,
An officer I was; yet, poor as ever—
Thou know’st it, Lord, whose help forsook me never!

One eve I sat, my spirits fresh and young,
A little girl about me fondly clung;
For fairy tales she craved—a countless store
Had I of these, though otherwise so poor.
That pretty child! how well she loved my lore!
How oft she promised ne’er from me to sever!
Thou know’st it, Lord, be thou her guardian ever!

‘Would I were rich!’ I lift to Heaven my prayer;
The child has ripened to a maiden fair.
She is so gentle, graceful, good, and kind—
Had she my heart’s sad secret but divined,
Could I, as erst, in her eyes favour find?—
No, I am poor, and must be silent ever—
So wills our Lord, whose wisdom erreth never.

‘Would I were rich in patience, as in love!
Then might my prayer meet answer from above.
Thou, my beloved, love me in return,
From these weak lines my youth’s sad history learn;
But no, the truth thou must not yet discern—
For I am poor, my future dark as ever—
Bless her, good Lord, and leave her friendless never!’”

Such verses as these people write when they are in love, but no sensible man will allow them to be printed. Here was expressed one of the sharpest sorrows of life, the animal necessity of struggling after, if not the fruit, at least one of the stray leaves from the bread-fruit tree. The higher the station, the more bitter is the pang. Poverty is the stagnant pool of life ; no picture of beauty can be reflected therein.

Look at the poor summer bird whose wing is broken beyond hope of recovery, whose soaring flight is checked for ever, and you see one whose energies, both of body and mind, are pressed to the earth by the heavy hand of poverty. The words lieutenant, love, and lack of gold form a triangle, or, if you will, the half of Fortune's shattered die.

The lieutenant felt his misery acutely ; he leaned his head against the window-frame, and sighed deeply.

"The poor watchman out in the street is far happier than I ! He knows not what I call want ; he has a home, a wife, and children, who weep with him in his sorrow, and rejoice with him in his joy. Oh, how much happier should I be, could I exchange my situation for his, and wander through life with no other hopes than he has ! Yes, he is certainly happier than I am !"

In that same moment, the watchman became once more a watchman. The Clogs of Fortune had caused his soul to pass into the lieutenant's, but there, as we have just seen, he felt less satisfied, and preferred the life he had a few minutes before despised. Thus the watchman became a watchman again.

"That was a stupid dream," said he ; "but it was droll enough, certainly. I thought I was the lieutenant up there, and yet, that I was not comfortable. I wanted my old mother, and the babies who are ready to smother me with kisses."

He sat still thinking over his dream ; it would not go out of his head. The Clogs of Fortune were still on his feet. Suddenly, a falling star shot down from the sky.

"There it goes!" said he. "How many stars are up there? I should like very much to be able to look at those bright things closer, especially the moon. The student for whom my wife washes says, that 'When we die, we shall fly about from one star to another.' That cannot be true, but it would be extremely pleasant. Now, if I could but just make a little jump up to the moon, I should not mind leaving my body behind lying here on the steps!"

There are certain thoughts and wishes to which we should beware of giving utterance, but doubly cautious should he be who has on his feet the Clogs of Fortune. Mark, now, what happened to the watchman.

Few amongst us are not acquainted with the rapidity of steam travelling, for we have proved it, either in railway carriages over the land, or in steamboats over the sea. But the velocity of steam, compared to that of light, is as the progress of the sloth, or the pace of the snail; for light travels nineteen million times faster than the fleetest race-horse. Electricity is, however, far swifter even than light; and on the wings of electricity flies the soul when freed from its earthly encumbrance.

The rays of the sun require only eight minutes and a few seconds for a journey of twenty millions of Danish miles, but the soul performs the same distance in an infinitely shorter period. To her the space between the heavenly bodies is no more than would be to us the distance between the houses of friends living in the same town, even when those houses stand tolerably near each other. Such an electric shock in the heart deprives us, however, of all use of our bodies; unless, indeed, like the watchman, we happen to have the Clogs of Fortune on our feet.

In the course of a few seconds the watchman had traversed two hundred and forty thousand miles, and had arrived at the moon, which, as every one knows, is composed of much finer materials than the earth, and is what we should call light as new-fallen snow. He

found himself upon one of the numerous mountains which may be seen in Dr. Mädler's large map of the moon, the interior of which might be described as a cauldron about half a Danish mile in depth.

At the foot of the mountain lay a town, of whose appearance an idea might be formed by putting the white of an egg into a glass of water, for the substance of which it was composed was just as soft; and similar towers with cupolas and hanging balconies, all perfectly transparent, hovered to and fro in the thin clear atmosphere. Our earth was seen above, looking like a great dark-red ball.

He saw a number of creatures around him, who must certainly have been what we call human beings, but they looked very different from us; they seemed quite of another species, and it would require a far more luxuriant fancy than that possessed by astronomers to imagine anything like them. They had a language of their own—I suppose no one would expect the soul of the watchman to understand it—nevertheless, understand it he did, for our spirits have far greater capabilities than we are inclined to believe.

Thus the watchman's soul understood perfectly the language of the dwellers in the moon. They were disputing about our earth, and doubting whether it could be inhabited. The air, they thought, must be too thick for any reasonable moon-dweller to breathe, and, indeed, most were of opinion that of all the heavenly bodies the moon alone was inhabited.

However, we will not listen to what was said, but rather betake ourselves to East Street, and see what has become of the watchman's body.

Lifeless on the steps it lay; the "morning star" (a club armed with iron spikes) had fallen out of its hand; its eyes were fixed with an upward gaze upon the moon, whither its right honourable companion, the soul, had wandered.

"What is the hour, watchman?" asked a passer-by.

As no answer came, the inquirer gently tapped the apparently sleeping figure on the nose, whereupon down it fell at full length upon the ground. The watchman was dead! All his companions were greatly shocked when they heard of the accident. The story was repeated from one to another, a great deal was said about it; and at daybreak the body was carried to the hospital.

Now suppose the soul were to return to seek the body in East Street, and find it gone! Perhaps she might then apply to the police to make inquiries, next to the Directory Office, in order to advertise it among other things lost, stolen, or strayed, and last of all she might perchance seek her companion in the hospital. But never fear; believe me, the soul is always wise when left to herself; it is only the body that renders her stupid.

As was said before, the watchman's body was taken to the hospital, where, naturally enough, the first thing done was to take off the clogs. The soul must now return; she flew straight to the body, and in a few seconds there was once more life in the man. And he declared that this had been the most dreadful night of his life; that not for two gold pieces would he experience such sensations again. However, all was over now.

That same day he left the hospital, but the clogs were left behind.

CHAPTER IV.

A CRITICAL MOMENT—AN EVENING'S DRAMATIC READINGS—
A MOST UNUSUAL JOURNEY.

EVERY inhabitant of Copenhagen knows the situation of Frederick's Hospital; nevertheless, it may be well to give a short description of it, as it is just possible that others besides inhabitants of Copenhagen may read this story.

This hospital is separated from the street by a tolerably high railing, the iron staves composing which stand so far apart from each other that—so it is said—some very thin

students have at times found it possible to squeeze themselves through, and thus make delightfully frequent visits to their friends in the town. The part of the body which they had most difficulty in squeezing through was the head; consequently, in this case, as indeed in many another, the smallest heads were most convenient.

So much by way of introduction.

One of the young men, of whom it could be said only physically that he had a thick head, happened to be on watch that evening. The rain poured down in torrents; yet, despite these two hindrances, the weather and the size of his head, he must go out just for a quarter of an hour. It was not worth while, he thought, to trouble the porter about such a trifle, when he could by an effort slip through the iron rails; and, while pondering over the subject, he stumbled upon the clogs which the watchman had left behind him.

That these were the Clogs of Fortune, of course, never occurred to him; it was plain, however, that they might be serviceable in such weather as this, and so he put them on. The only question with him was whether he would be able to squeeze himself through or not; he had never tried the experiment before.

"How I wish I had my head through!" said he. No sooner said than done; the head, though very large and thick, at once glided through as easily as possible—such was the power of the clogs. But the body must needs follow.

"Ugh! I am too stout!" said he. "I thought the difficulty was the head. I shall never get through!"

He tried to draw his head back again, but that was impossible. He could move his neck to and fro at pleasure, and that was all he could do. His first impulse was to be in a pet; the very next moment his spirits had sunk below zero. The Clogs of Fortune had brought him into this most distressing situation, and, unfortunately, the thought never entered his head that he might wish himself free; instead of wishing, he strove, and consequently could not

stir from the spot. The rain poured down, and not a person was to be seen in the street. The entrance bell he could not reach ; how in the world was he to get loose ?

It was probable that there he must stand until morning ; that then a smith must be sent for to file away one of the staves ; that all this would not be the work of a moment ; that in the meantime all the boys belonging to the large school just opposite would be let loose ; that the whole district of Nyboder would hasten to the spot for the pleasure of seeing him in the pillory. A famous running and funning there would be !

"Ugh !" cried he, "the blood is rushing to my head ; it will drive me mad ! I am half crazy already ! Oh, if I could but get loose !"

Now this was just what he should have said before ; no sooner had he expressed the wish than it was fulfilled ; his head was free. Into the house he rushed, nearly distracted by the fright which the Clogs of Fortune had occasioned him.

But we must not suppose that his adventures were ended. No, indeed ; the worst were yet to come.

The night passed away quietly enough, as did also the day following. Meantime, the clogs had not been taken away. In the evening there were dramatic readings at the little theatre in Kannike Street. The house was crammed ; among other pieces recited was a new poem, called "My Aunt's Spectacles," by H. C. Andersen, the substance of which was as follows :—

The poet's aunt, who in the good old times would certainly have been entitled to the honour of being burned as a witch, had an extraordinary skill in fortune-telling. She seemed to know beforehand all the chances and changes of this changing world ; and though not yet in the "sunset of life," her wondrous "mystical lore" made

"Coming events cast their shadows before."

Every one coveted her secret, but in vain ; she would never reveal it. At last, however, her youngest and

favourite nephew entreated her so earnestly to confide it to him, only just to him, that the good lady's resolution gave way ; and putting on a face of solemn importance, she took off her spectacles and presented them to him, declaring that the marvellous power of second sight was vested in them, and them only.

"Try them yourself, my boy," she said, seeing him look incredulous. "Go to any place of public resort, secure a position whence you can overlook the crowd, put on my spectacles, and forthwith all the people you survey through them will be to your eyes like a pack of cards spread out on a table ; their most secret thoughts and wishes will be laid bare, and you will, moreover, be enabled without difficulty to foresee their future lot."

The youth could scarcely wait an instant to thank the good lady for her kindness, he was in such haste to run off and test his new acquisition. He remembered that there would be dramatic readings at the theatre that very evening ; nothing could be more convenient, for nowhere could he overlook a great throng of people so easily as from the stage ; accordingly, thither he repaired.

Then presenting himself to the audience, he puts on his spectacles and begs permission to tell the fortunes of the individuals composing the crowd. And now he begins by expressing astonishment at the curious sight opened to his view ; he drops mysterious hints about the queen of hearts, "Whose dark, thrilling eyes," he declares, "are fixed with intensity upon the knave of diamonds ; he would give worlds to have such glances directed towards himself."

The knave of clubs he next notices as "the richest man in that assembly, although, unfortunately"—but here he stops, as unwilling to reveal family secrets.

He then proposes finding out the happiest person present ; the one who should live longest ; the future fortunes of the nation ; the success which should attend forthcoming representations at the theatre.

Still he evades giving direct, intelligible information,

declaring himself quite bewildered ; he is resolved not to hurt the feelings of the audience by his communications, and yet he fears that they must distrust his vaunted powers. Thus he can only, with the deepest respect, leave them to their own conclusions, and bid farewell to the assembly.

The poem, absurd as it was, being well recited, was received with great applause. Amongst the audience was our friend from the hospital, who seemed to have entirely forgotten his adventure of the preceding evening. The Clogs of Fortune were again on his feet, for as no one had claimed them, and the streets were dirty, he thought he might as well make use of them.

The first part of the poem pleased him exceedingly, and although his attention was soon distracted, the idea still haunted him. He fancied he should much like to have such a pair of spectacles himself.

“Perhaps,” he thought, “they might enable the wearer to look straight into people’s hearts, and this would be far more interesting than the knowledge of future events. For whatever was to happen must be clear enough to every one when the time came, whereas the heart—who could ever boast of having read that? Say it were only the hearts of the row of gentlemen and ladies sitting on the front benches ; could I look into them, what a revelation there would be ! a sort of shop would open before me. Ah ! how my eyes would search into every corner !

“For instance, in that of the lady sitting just opposite I should certainly find an extensive assortment of fashionable millinery, caps, ribbons, and silk ; the shop of the lady next her would probably be found perfectly empty ; it would, however, be all the better for cleansing. But are there no shops of substantial wares ?

“Ah, yes !” sighed he, “I know one in which everything is solid and good, but, unfortunately, a shopman is there—more’s the pity ! and he is perpetually crying out, ‘Be so kind as to walk in, gentlemen ; here you will find everything

you want !' I wish I really could step in, like a pleasant thought, and glide on from heart to heart !"

These last words sufficed to awaken the dormant power of the clogs ; the whole man immediately shrank up and commenced a most unusual journey, for it travelled through the hearts of the front row of spectators. The first heart he entered was that of a lady, and for a moment he fancied himself in the Orthopædic Institute or Hospital for the Deformed, in the chamber whose walls are hung with plaster casts of diseased limbs. There was, however, this difference : in the institute the casts are taken at the period of the patients' entry ; here they had been taken after the originals had departed. They were, in fact, casts of very dear and particular friends, whose deformities, whether of body or mind, were thus carefully preserved.

Suddenly, he passed thence into another female heart ; but this appeared to him like a solemn, glorious church. The white dove of innocence brooded over the altar ; he could most gladly have fallen on his knees before it, but that he must away—away into the next heart. Still, however, he heard the deep tones of the organ, and it seemed as if he had become another and a better man, not altogether unworthy to enter the neighbouring sanctuary.

And here was revealed to him a miserable garret wherein reposed a sick mother. Poor and miserable was that chamber in appearance, yet God's warm sunshine streamed through the open window, beautiful roses bloomed in the little wooden box on the roof, and two sky-blue birds warbled from their branches a glorious song of joy, peace, and love, whilst the sick mother implored a blessing upon her daughter.

He now crept upon hands and feet through an over-filled butcher's shop ; there was flesh, and flesh, and nothing but flesh all round him : this was the heart of a rich, respectable man, whose name may doubtless be found in the Directory.

He next entered the heart of the last person's wife. This was an old ruined dove-cot ; the husband's portrait was made use of as a weather-cock, and seemed connected in some manner with the doors, which accordingly opened and shut as the man moved.

Thence he glided into a cabinet formed of mirrors, like a room shown in Castle Rosenborg. These mirrors, however, possessed the power of magnifying to an almost incredible degree. In the centre, on the floor, sat, like the Dalai Lama of Tibet, the individual's own insignificant self, apparently wholly occupied with the contemplation of his own astounding greatness.

After this, he believed himself transported into a needle-case filled with sharp-pointed needles. "Surely," thought he, "this must be the heart of an old maid !" But no ; it was the heart of a young officer who had been honoured with several orders of knighthood, and who was said to be a man of superior understanding and refinement.

The unfortunate youth crept out of the last heart in the row quite bewildered ; he could not arrange his thoughts ; he could only believe that all he had seen and felt was the work of his too active imagination.

"Alas !" sighed he, "am I going mad ? I feel insufferably hot ; the blood is rushing to my head !" All at once he remembered the singular incident of the preceding evening, how his head had remained fixed between the iron railings of the hospital. "That is it !" said he : "I must attend to it before it is too late. Perhaps a Russian bath would be serviceable ; how I wish I were extended on the upper board !"

Accordingly, he found himself forthwith lying on the highest shelf of a vapour bath ; yes, there he lay with all his clothes on, boots, clogs, everything ; hot drops of water trickled down from the ceiling on his face.

"Ugh !" shrieked he, starting up with astonishment. The attendant shrieked also when he saw a man standing full dressed in the bath. Our hero had just sufficient presence of mind to whisper in explanation, "'Tis for a

wager ;” but the first thing he did when he reached home, was to lay a large blistering plaster over his chest, and another across his back, in order to draw out his madness.

Next morning his back was covered with blood, and this was all that he had gained from the Clogs of Fortune.

CHAPTER V.

THE METAMORPHOSES OF THE COPYING CLERK.

WE have not forgotten the watchman all this time, neither had he forgotten the clogs which he had found in the street, and which had been carried with himself to the hospital. He now came and fetched them away ; but as neither the lieutenant nor any one else in his street would own them, the clogs were at last taken to the police office.

“They look exactly like mine,” said one of the copying clerks, placing them by the side of his own. “No eye but a shoemaker’s could see any difference between them.”

“Mr. Clerk,” said a man who had just then entered with some papers. The clerk turned round to answer the summons. When the man’s business was despatched, and he again looked at the clogs, he could not make up his mind whether the pair on the right or on the left hand side were his own. “It must be those that are wet !” thought he ; and a most unfortunate thought it was, for they were the Clogs of Fortune.

But, after all, why should not mistakes happen sometimes in the police office as well as everywhere else ? So he drew on the clogs, put his papers into his pocket, and tucked under his arm some manuscripts which he had to copy at home. It was now Sunday morning ; the weather was fine. “A walk to Fredericksberg,” thought he, “will do me good ;” so out he went.

Nowhere could there be found a more quiet, sober-minded person than this young man ; right glad are we

that he should enjoy the simple pleasure this walk will afford him ; it is just the very thing for him after sitting still so long. And he walked on for some time in such a straightforward, matter-of-fact fashion that the clogs had no opportunity of displaying their magical powers.

In the avenue he met an acquaintance of his, one of our younger poets, who told him that he was going next day to set out on his summer excursion.

"What ! roaming again ?" said the clerk. "Happy man that you are, free to go wherever you please ; we common mortals are condemned to wear a chain."

"But the chain is fastened to the bread-fruit tree !" replied the poet. "You need have no care for the morrow ; and when you grow old, a pension is given you."

"For all that, your lot is the happier," returned the clerk ; "it must be so pleasant to sit under a tree all day writing verses, and then to have flattering speeches made you by all the world ; besides, you are your own master. Ah ! you should only try for once how wearisome it is to spend all your time in an office, writing about some trivial matter or other !"

The poet shook his head, the clerk likewise shook his head, each kept his own opinion, and they parted.

"Strange people are those poets !" said the clerk. "I should like very much to understand them and their ways—to become a poet myself ; I am sure I should not write such whining, pining nonsense as some do. What a lovely spring day this is ! just the day for a poet ! The air is so unusually clear, the clouds are so beautiful, and such a delicious fragrance comes from the trees and flowers ! I have not felt as I do at this moment for many years."

It will be seen from the latter part of this speech that he has now, in truth, become a poet ; not that any great alteration was apparent in him—it is, indeed, an absurdity to imagine that a poet must needs be totally different from other men. On the contrary, there may frequently be found natures more poetical than many of

our acknowledged poets ; the principal difference being that the poet has a better mental memory, and can thus hold fast his ideas and feelings till they are clearly embodied in words, which others cannot do.

However this may be, the transformation of a commonplace nature into one capable of appreciating all that is beautiful and good is indeed a change, and as such the clerk's metamorphosis is striking enough.

"This delightful fragrance !" said he, "how it reminds me of my Aunt Magdalen's violets ! Ah ! that was when I was a little boy. What a long time it is since I thought of her, the good old aunt ! She used to live behind the Exchange yonder. Let the winter be ever so severe, she always kept a bough or a few green shoots in water. How sweet the violets were ! And then I used to lay a heated penny on the frozen window-pane to make a little peep-hole ; what a pretty view I had through it ! There was the canal with the ships lying so still amid the frozen water, and forsaken by all the mariners ; one noisy, screaming crow forming their whole garrison. And when at last the fresh spring breezes returned, then everything received new life : with song and merriment the ice was broken up, the ships were rigged and tackled, and away they sailed to foreign lands.

"But I have always stayed behind ; I must always stay behind, and sit in the office and see others come to fetch their passports that they may travel abroad ! Such is my lot ! Alas !" sighed he ; then suddenly checking himself. "Why, what can ail me ! I have never thought or felt in this manner before ; it must be the effect of the spring air ; it gives me almost as much pain as pleasure !"

He felt in his pocket for his papers. "These will make me think of something else," said he, as his eye wandered over the first sheet. "'Madame Sigbrith, an original tragedy, in five acts,'" read he aloud. "What is this ? Why it is in my own handwriting ; did I write this tragedy ? 'The Cabel on the Ramparts, Vaudeville.'

How came all these papers in my pocket? Somebody must have put them in. And here is a letter!"

Exactly so; the letter came from the manager of a theatre; both the pieces whose titles he had read were rejected, and the manager's opinion of them was expressed in terms anything but courteous.

"Hem! hem!" said the clerk, and he sat down on a bench; his thoughts seemed so fresh, his spirits so elastic. Involuntarily he plucked one of the flowers near him; it was but a common little daisy, yet what botanists could only teach us after several long lectures this simple floweret explained in a minute. She related the myth of her birth, told of the power of the sunshine which had unfolded her delicate leaves and drawn forth her fragrance, and thus called forth thoughts of those human struggles which, in a similar manner, awaken the slumbering feelings of man.

Light and air are the faithful lovers of the flower: light is the favoured one, and to him she turns continually; but, when light disappears, she folds her petals together, and sleeps in the safe guardianship of air. "It is light which makes me so beautiful!" said the flower. "But it is air that preserves thy life!" whispered the poet's voice.

A boy, standing a few paces distant, just then threw his stick into a ditch. The water splashed up among the green branches waving above, and the clerk thought of the millions of little insects in those drops of water which must have been hurled upwards, and to whom such an evolution must have been as fearful as it would be for us to be suddenly whirled high into the region of the clouds. The clerk smiled as he mused over this, and over the great change he felt to have stirred up such new fancies.

"I know," he said, "that I am only dreaming. But how strange it is that I should dream, and yet be aware all the while that I am dreaming! I wonder whether I shall remember this to-morrow when I awake? I feel

happier than I ever was before; I seem thoroughly awake, have a clear perception of everything, and yet I am sure that if I have any recollection of my present thoughts and feelings to-morrow, they will all appear to me stupid nonsense. So it is, all those clever and beautiful things one says and hears in one's dreams are just like fairy gold—rich and precious at night, but, when daylight returns, found to be nothing but stones and withered leaves.

"Alas!" said he, sighing quite sadly, and looking up at the merry little singing birds as they hopped from bough to bough, "their lot is far happier than mine; they can fly, that is a glorious art! Happy he who is born to soar! Ah, yes, if I could change myself into anything, it should be into such a little lark as that!"

In the same moment, the sleeves and flaps of his coat were united together and formed wings, his clothes became feathers, and the clogs claws; he was aware of the change, and laughed inwardly. "Well," said he, "now I may be sure that I am dreaming, though, certainly, I never dreamed anything so ridiculous as this before!"

He flew up into the green branches and sang, but there was no poetry in the song, for the poetic nature was gone. The clogs, like every one else who does anything worth the doing, could only do one thing at a time. The clerk wished to be a poet, and accordingly he became a poet; he then wished to be a little bird, and a bird he became; but a poet he could be no longer.

"This is pleasant enough," said he; "all day I sit in the office attending to business, and at night I can dream of flying about in the form of a lark in Fredericksberg Gardens. What a capital farce this would make!"

He then flew down from the branch, turned his head on all sides, and struck with his beak the tender blades

of grass, which, compared with his present size, appeared as large as the palm branches of North Africa.

It was but for a moment. Suddenly he seemed enveloped in darkness; something, to him monstrous and heavy, was thrown over him: it was a large schoolboy's cap; the hand of one of the juveniles of Nyboder passed underneath it and seized the clerk by the back and wings.

In the first impulse of surprise he cried out, "You impudent young rascal! I am clerk at the Police Office!" But this sounded to the boy like "pipipi!" He struck the bird on the beak and walked away with it.

In the avenue he met two schoolboys of the higher class, in rank, at least—in learning they were amongst the lowest in the school; they bought the bird for fourpence. And thus the copying clerk was taken back to Copenhagen, and became a member of a family in Gother Street.

"It is well that I am only dreaming," said the clerk, "else I should really be angry! First I was a poet, and now I am a lark! I suppose it was the poetic nature which changed me into a little insignificant bird! It is a miserable condition enough, especially when one falls into the hands of boys. I wonder what will become of me next?"

The boys brought him into an elegantly furnished apartment, where they were received by a stout, good-humoured-looking lady, who was by no means pleased at their bringing in with them a common field-bird, as she called the lark. However, for once she said she would excuse it, and they might put their little prisoner into the empty cage that hung by the window. "Perhaps that may please my pretty Poll," added she, smiling tenderly on a large green paroquet who was swinging himself in his splendid cage; "it is Poll's birthday, so the little field-bird must come and congratulate him."

Poll answered not a word, but continued to swing himself backwards and forwards with a very stately air, while a pretty little canary-bird, who had been only the

preceding summer brought from the warm, spicy land of his birth, at once began a loud song of welcome.

"Be quiet, you noisy thing!" said the lady, throwing a white pocket-handkerchief over his cage.

"Pipi," sighed he; "that is a horrible snowstorm!" and he immediately ceased singing.

The clerk, or as the lady called him, the field-bird, was put into a little cage close to the canary-bird's, and not far off that of the parrot. The only human phrase that Poll knew was, "Come, let us be men!" and comical enough it sounded sometimes. Everything else that he said or shrieked was as unintelligible as the twittering of the canary-bird, except to the clerk, who, being now a bird himself, could understand both his companions perfectly well.

"Once," sang the canary-bird, "I was free, flying about among green palms and flowering almond-trees. I flew with my brothers and sisters over the beautiful flowers and the clear mirror-like lake bordered with so many fragrant shrubs. There, too, were parrots with glorious plumage; they used to tell such merry stories, so long and so many!"

"Those were wild, uneducated birds," returned the parrot. "Come, let us be men! Why don't you laugh? If the lady and all the strangers that come here can laugh at it, surely you can do so too. Not to be able to enjoy a good joke shows a great defect in the understanding. Come, let us be men!"

"Oh, dost thou not remember those lovely maidens who danced under the shade of their wide-spreading tents, and trees so tall and so full of blossom? Dost thou not remember the delicious fruit they bore, and the fresh, cool juice in the wild herbs which grew so luxuriantly at their feet?"

"Oh yes!" said the parrot, "but I am much more comfortable here. I am well fed, and treated with consideration. I know I am a clever fellow, and that is enough for me. Let us be men! You, indeed, have

what they call a poetic soul, but I have solid acquirements and plenty of wit. You have genius, but no prudence; thus you are always bursting out with those wild piercing notes of yours, and thus you are continually silenced. No one ever presumes to cover up my cage, no, indeed, for I cost a good deal more than you did; besides, I can defend myself with my beak, and confound them with my wit. Come, let us be men!"

"Oh, my beloved, my beautiful fatherland!" sang the canary-bird, "ever will I sing of thy dark-leaved trees, and thy peaceful bays, where the long drooping branches fondly kiss the dancing waters; ever will I sing of the gladsome movements of my bright-hued brothers and sisters, as they sported and sang among those splendid cactuses!"

"Pray give up this melancholy strain!" said the parrot. "Say something which may make us laugh. Laughter is a sign of the highest intellect. Do you think that a dog or a horse could laugh? no, but they can cry; only men can laugh. Ha! ha! ha!" screamed Poll; and ended with the repetition of his single piece of wit—"Come, let us be men!"

"Thou little gray Danish bird," said the canary, "thou too art become a prisoner! It may be cold in thy native woods, but there at least thou hast freedom. Oh, fly away, they have forgotten to shut the door of thy cage; the window is open, fly quickly, fly away!"

Instinctively the clerk hopped out of his cage; in that same moment the half-opened door was heard to creak, and stealthily, stealthily, with eyes green and glistening, crept into the room the cat. The canary fluttered about in his cage, the parrot flapped his wings and screamed, "Come, let us be men!" The clerk was seized with mortal terror and flew out of the window. For a long while he flew over houses and streets; at last he felt the want of rest. The house exactly opposite seemed familiar to him; one window was open; in he flew, into his own room. He perched upon the table.

Almost unconsciously he repeated the parrot's witticism, "Come, let us be men!" and the next moment the lark had become the copying clerk, comfortably seated upon his own table.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEST AND LAST GIFT THE CLOGS COULD BESTOW.

NEXT day, early in the morning, while the clerk was yet in bed, a knocking was heard at his door; it was his neighbour, the young divinity student, who lived on the same floor. He came in.

"Lend me your clogs," said he; "it is damp in the garden, although the sun is shining gloriously. I shall go out and smoke."

He drew on the clogs, and was presently walking in the garden, an inclosure which could boast of possessing both an apple and a plum tree; even so small a garden as this is highly prized in Copenhagen.

The student walked up and down; it was just six o'clock; a post-horn sounded from the street.

"Oh, to travel! to travel!" exclaimed he, "that is the greatest happiness this world can give! That is my chief, my highest wish! Then would my restless longings be stilled. But far, far away must it be. I would see that glorious Switzerland, I would visit Italy, I would——"

It was well both for himself and for us that the clogs fulfilled his wish without delay, or he would have gone roaming, nobody knows where. He travelled. He was travelling in Switzerland, pent up with eight other passengers inside a diligence; he had a bad pain in his head, a worse in his back, and his feet were miserably swollen by their long confinement in tight boots. He was in a state between sleeping and waking.

Within his right-hand pocket were his letters of credit, in his left pocket the passport, and in the little leathern purse, sewn inside his waistcoat, a few louis d'ors. Every dream foretold the loss of one or other of these

treasures; thus he was continually starting up with feverish impatience, his hand describing a triangular movement from the right pocket to the left, and thence to his bosom, to feel whether all was safe. Umbrellas, sticks, and hats were suspended from the roof of the vehicle, shaking together over his head, and impeding the magnificent view opening before him.

Dark, sombre, and grand was the landscape now spread around. The vast firwoods looked no larger than little tufts of heather shading those tremendous mountains whose summits were lost in the clouds. It began to snow; the wind blew cold.

"Ah!" sighed he, "if we were but on the other side of the Alps, then it would be summer, and I should be able to get my letters of credit cashed. The anxiety I feel about my money prevents me from enjoying Switzerland. Oh, that I were on the other side!"

And immediately he was on the other side, travelling in Italy, between Florence and Rome. Before him, amid the dark, blue-tinted mountains, lay the lake of Thrasymene, looking like flaming gold as it reflected the glorious evening sky. Here, on the spot where Hannibal defeated Flaminius, peaceful vines now lovingly entwine their bright, graceful tendrils, and pretty half-naked children are guarding a herd of coal-black swine crowded under the group of fragrant laurel trees growing by the way-side. Could we paint this picture so as to do it justice, every one would exclaim with delight, "Beautiful Italy!"

But the divinity student and his fellow-travellers said nothing. Poisonous flies and mosquitoes swarmed around them by thousands. Vainly did the unfortunate travellers strike at their tormentors with a myrtle bough; they cared little for that, but, on the contrary, they stung the more. There was not a person in the carriage whose face was not swelled and disfigured by their bites. As for the poor horses, the flies settled upon them in such swarms that they looked like carrion; and, if the driver

alighted from his seat to chase them away, in another moment they were there again.

The sun set ; a sudden chill thrilled through the entire landscape ; it was like breathing the cold damp air of a sepulchre, after a day's enjoyment of the warmth of summer. The clouds and surrounding mountains now assumed that peculiar green hue which is sometimes observed in old paintings, and which to the untravelled eye might seem unnatural ; it was, indeed, a beautiful scene, but the stomach was empty, the body wearied ; all the ardent longings of the heart were centred upon a comfortable lodging for the night—a blessing scarcely to be expected.

Their road led through an olive forest, just as at home they might have had to wind their way through clumps of crooked willow-trees. And here stood a solitary hotel. Some half-score of begging cripples lay encamped in front of it ; the most robust of them looking, to borrow an expression of Marryat's, like "Famine's eldest son, just come of age ;" while, of the rest, some were blind, some crawled about with withered limbs, and some displayed shrunken arms and fingerless hands. Here was wretchedness indeed. "Eccellenza, miserabili !" moaned they in full chorus, all eagerly stretching out their diseased members.

The hostess received her newly-arrived guests attired in a dirty blouse, with bare feet and dishevelled hair. The doors were kept together by pack-thread ; the floor of the room was composed of bricks half broken up ; bats flew backwards and forwards under the low ceiling ; and as to the odour ! . . .

"It would be as well if we had our supper served up in the stable," said one of the travellers ; "there, at least, one knows the atmosphere one breathes."

The windows were opened to let in a little fresh air, when forthwith arose the withered arms, and again was heard the eternal "Miserabili, Eccellenza !" Various inscriptions might be seen adorning the walls, more

than half of them about "La bella Italia," although anything but complimentary.

Supper was brought in; first came a soup composed of water seasoned with pepper and rancid oil. The latter ingredient also played chief part in the salad; stale eggs and roasted cockscombs formed the most savoury dishes, and even the wine had a culinary taste; it was, in fact, a genuine mixture.

At night the travellers' boxes were piled up against the door; one of the party was to guard them while the others slept. The lot fell upon our divinity student. Oh, how close was that room! The heat was most oppressive; the mosquitoes buzzed and stung without mercy; the "Miserabili" outside groaned and moaned, even in their dreams.

"Yes, travelling would be very pleasant," sighed the student, "if only one had not a body, or if it could rest while the spirit roamed at large, free and unfettered! Wherever I go, I am still tormented with an unaccountable craving which consumes my very soul. I long after something better than I can find; something enduring—yes, for something perfect; but where, and what is it? And yet I do know what it is I desire, it is happiness—complete, lasting happiness!"

No sooner had he spoken these words than he was once again at home. Long white curtains hung before the windows, and on the floor, in the centre of the room, was a black coffin. There he lay, sleeping the quiet sleep of death; his wish was fulfilled; his body rested while his spirit wandered free and unencumbered by its earthly tabernacle. "Call no man happy till he is in his grave," such were the words of Solon, and here was a fresh confirmation of the sage's wisdom.

Every corpse is, as it were, a sphynx, still propounding the same unalterable, unanswerable question; thus did the mysterious sphynx, now lying in the black coffin before us, recall the ever-painful doubt expressed in the

following verses, which the student had written two days previously :—

“O mighty Death, thy silence wakens dread,
Fain would we raise the veil that hides thy brow;
‘Whither,’ we ask, ‘is the loved spirit fled?
Our brother and our friend, where dwells he now?’

We ask in vain, the thought which strove to scale
Boldly aspiring, the cloud-hidden skies,
Recoils in terror; Faith and knowledge fail,
And awe and darkness blind our straining eyes.

Yet dark-brow’d Angel, welcome to our door!
Poor struggling human spirit, hail thy guest!
Thy griefs, the world’s unkindness vex no more
When Death’s cold arms are clasped around thy breast.”

Two figures are seen moving in the room ; we recognise them both ; they are the ambassador of Fortune, and the fairy, Care. They are bending over the dead man.

“Seest thou now,” said Care, “what sort of happiness thy clogs have conferred on humanity?”

“Surely,” replied Pleasure, “they bestowed a real blessing upon him who slumbers here, if on no other.”

“Nay,” rejoined Care, “his departure was his own choice, he did not wait for his summons. The eyes of his spirit had not yet been opened to discern those hidden treasures with which this world abounds ; he had not accomplished his destined task. I will confer on him a true benefit.”

And she took the clogs off his feet. Immediately the sleep of death was ended, the dead man arose with renewed life and vigour. Care vanished, and with her vanished the clogs ; doubtless, she considered they had been proved to be her rightful property.



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